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*granddaughter of
General Peter Gansevoort, junior
and widow of the
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of Albany, New York*

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GANSEVOORT - LANSING
COLLECTION

Ford
A. 2

*Fanice
Meredith*

VOLUME I.

B O O K S B Y M R . F O R D

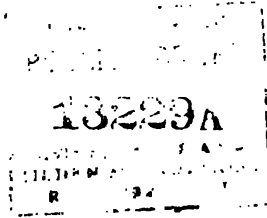


The Honorable Peter Stirling
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The Story of an Untold Love
The True George Washington
Tattle-Tales of Cupid
The Many-Sided Franklin
The New England Primer

THE NEW YORK
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*Fanice
Meredith*

VOLUME I.



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JOY WEB
1899
1899

TO GEORGE W. VANDERBILT

*My dear George,
Into the warp and woof of every book an author weaves much that even the subtlest readers cannot suspect, far less discern. To them it is but a cross and pile of threads interlaced to form a pattern which may please or displease their taste. But to the writer every filament has its own association: How each bit of silk or wool, flax or tow, was laboriously gathered, or was blown to him; when each was spun by the wheel of his fancy into yarns; the colour and tint his imagination gave to each skein; and where each was finally woven into the fabric by the shuttle of his pen. No thread ever quite detaches itself from its growth and spinning, dyeing and weaving, and each draws him back to hours and places seemingly unrelated to the work.*

And so, as I have read the proofs of this book I have found more than once that the pages have faded out of sight and in their stead I have seen Mount Pisgah and the French Broad River, or the ramp and terrace of Biltmore House, just as I saw them when writing the words which served to recall them to me. With the visions, too, has come a recurrence to our long talks, our work among the books, our games of chess, our cups of tea, our walks, our rides, and our drives. It is therefore a pleasure to me that the book so naturally gravitates to you, and that I may make it a remembrance of those past weeks of companionship, and an earnest of the present affection of

PAUL LEICESTER FORD.



[illegible]



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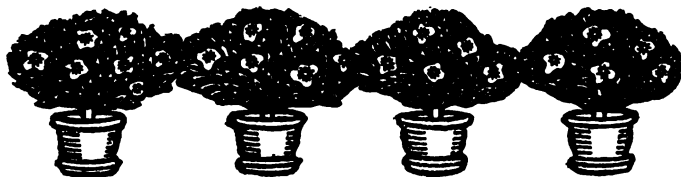


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- "From three men-of-war came a heavy cannonade that swept the shore line."
- "From post to post the horsemen passed."
- "The only signs they could see of the skirmish were little clouds of smoke."
- "The men could be heard ransacking the larder and cellar none too quietly."
- "I e'en bargained his passage on her."
- "A squadron of light dragoons rode into the water and struck boldly across."
- "The non-commissioned officers shouted summon to take the oath of allegiance to King George the Third."
- Royal Pardon.
- "Janice, raising the glass, defiantly gave, 'Success to Washington!'"
- "She threw herself on the bed and wept out her sense of wrong on her pillow."
- "The bolts were slipped back and the door was opened by a figure wrapped in a quilt."
- "'Drop that pistol, or I shoot!' came a sharp order."
- "'Is this a message from General Washington?' he vociferated."
- "The sound of shots served to bring inmates and candles to the front and back doors."
- "The body was found close to the stable with a bullet in his back."
- "The prisoner's head was hanging forward in an attitude denoting weariness."
- "'Which way is the Hessian picket?'"
- "'Give them a dose of Watts!'"
- "It was an apparently empty room into which the aide entered."
- "Washington rode over to inspect the prisoners."



JANICE MEREDITH

A TALE OF THE REVOLUTION

VOLUME I

A HEROINE OF MANY POSSIBILITIES

“***A**LONZO now once more found himself upon an element that had twice proved destructive to his happiness, but Neptune was propitious, and with gentle breezes wafted him toward his haven of bliss, toward Amaryllis. Alas, when but one day from happiness, a Moorish zebec —*”

“Janice!” called a voice.

The effect on the reader and her listener, both of whom were sitting on the floor, was instantaneous. Each started and sat rigidly intent for a moment; then, as the sound of approaching footsteps became audible, one girl hastily slipped a little volume under the counterpane of the bed, while the other sprang to her feet, and in a hurried, flustered way pretended to be getting something out of a tall wardrobe.

Before the one who hid the book had time to rise, a woman of fifty entered the room, and after a glance, cried: —

“Janice Meredith! How often have I told thee that it is ungentle for a female to repose on the floor?”

“Very often, mommy,” said Janice, rising meekly, meantime casting a quick glance at the bed, to see how far its smoothness had been disturbed.

“And still thee continues such unbecoming and vastly indelicate behaviour.”

“Oh, mommy, but it is so nice!” cried the girl. “Did n’t you like to sit on the floor when you were fifteen?”

"Janice, thou 't more careless every day in bed-making," ejaculated Mrs. Meredith, making a sudden dive toward the bed, as if she desired to escape the question. She smoothed the gay patchwork quilt, seemed to feel something underneath, and the next moment pulled out the hidden volume, which was bound, as the bookseller's advertisements phrased it, in "half calf, neat, marbled sides." One stern glance she gave the two red-faced culprits, and, opening the book, read out in a voice that was in itself an impeachment, "The Adventures of Alonzo and Amaryllis!"

There was an instant's silence, full of omen to the culprits, and then Mrs. Meredith's wrath found vent.

"Janice Meredith!" she cried. "On a Sabbath morning, when thee shouldst be setting thy thoughts in a fit order for church! And thou, Tabitha Drinker!"

"It's all my fault, Mrs. Meredith," hurriedly asserted Tabitha. "I brought the book with me from Trenton, and 't was I suggested that we go on reading this morning."

"Six hours of spinet practice thou shalt have to-morrow, miss," announced Mrs. Meredith to her daughter, "and this afternoon thou shalt say over the whole catechism. As for thee, Tabitha, I shall feel it my duty to write thy father of his daughter's conduct. Now hurry and make ready for church." And Mrs. Meredith started to leave the room.

"Oh, mommy," cried Janice, springing forward and laying a detaining hand on her mother's arm in an imploring manner, "punish me as much as you please, — I know 't was very, very wicked, — but don't take the book away! He and Amaryllis were just —"

"Not another sight shalt thou have of it, miss. My daughter reading novels, indeed!" and Mrs. Meredith departed, holding the evil book gingerly between her fingers, much as one might carry something that was liable to soil one's hands.

The two girls looked at each other, Tabitha with a woe-begone expression, and Janice with an odd one, which might mean many things. The flushed cheeks were perhaps due to guilt, but the tightly clinched little fists were certainly due to anger, and, noting these two only, one would have safely affirmed that Janice Meredith, meekly as she had taken her

mother's scolding, had a quick and hot temper. But the eyes were fairly starry with some emotion, certainly not anger, and though the lips were pressed tightly together, the feeling that had set them so rigidly was but a passing one, for suddenly the corners twitched, the straight lines bent into curves, and flinging herself upon the tall four-poster bedstead, Miss Meredith laughed as only fifteen can laugh.

"Oh, Tibbie, Tibbie," she presently managed to articulate, "if you look like that I shall die," and as the god of Momus once more seized her, she dragged the quilt into a rumpled pile, and buried her face in it, as if indeed attempting to suffocate herself.

"But, Janice, to think that we shall never know how it ended! I could n't sleep last night for hours, because I was so afraid that Amaryllis would n't have the opportunity to vindicate herself to — and 't would have been finished in another day."

"And a proper punishment for naughty Tibbie Drinker it is," declared Miss Meredith, sitting up and assuming a judicially severe manner. "What do you mean, miss, by tempting good little Janice Meredith into reading a wicked romance on Sunday?"

"Good little Janice!" cried Tibbie, contemptuously. "I could slap thee for that." But instead she threw her arms about Janice's neck and kissed her with such rapture and energy as to overbalance the judge from an upright position, and the two rolled over upon the bed laughing with anything but discretion, considering the nearness of their mentor. As a result a voice from a distance called sharply: —

"Janice!"

"O gemini!" cried the owner of that name, springing off the bed and beginning to unfasten her gown, — an example promptly followed by her room-mate.

"Art thou dressing, child?" called the voice, after a pause.

"Yes, mommy," answered Janice. Then she turned to her friend and asked, "Shall I wear my light chintz and kenton kerchief, or my purple and white striped Persian?"

"Sufficiently smart for a country lass, Jan," cried her friend.

"Don't call me country bred, Tibbie Drinker, just because you are a modish city girl."

"And why not thy blue shalloon?"

"'T is vastly unbecoming."

"Janice Meredith! Can't thee let the men alone?"

"I will when they will," airily laughed the girl.

"Do unto others—" quoted Tabitha.

"Then I will when thee sets me an example," retorted Janice, making a deep curtsy, the absence of drapery and bodice revealing the straightness and suppleness of the slender rounded figure, which still had as much of the child as of the woman in its lines.

"Little thought they get from me," cried Tabitha, with a toss of her head.

" 'Tell me where is fancy bred,
In the heart or in the head?' "

hummed Janice. "Of course, one does n't think about men, Mistress Tabitha. One feels." Which remark showed perception of a feminine truth far in advance of Miss Meredith's years.

"Unfeeling Janice!"

"'T is a good thing for the oafs and ploughboys of Brunswick. For there are none better."

"Philemon Hennion?"

" 'Your servant, marms,' " mimicked Janice, catching up a hair brush and taking it from her head as if it were a hat, while making a bow with her feet widely spread. " 'Having nothing better ter do, I've made bold ter come over ter drink a dish of tea with you.' " The girl put the brush under her arm, still further spread her feet, put her hands behind some pretended coat-tails, let the brush slip from under her arms, so that it fell to the floor with a racket, stooped with an affectation of clumsiness which seemed impossible to the lithe figure, while mumbling something inarticulate in an apparent paroxysm of embarrassment, — which quickly became a genuine inability to speak from laughter.

"Janice, thee should turn actress."

"Oh, Tibbie, lace my bodice quickly, or I shall burst of laughing," breathlessly begged the girl.

A Heroine of Many Possibilities 5

"Janice," said her mother, entering, "how often must I tell thee that giggling is missish? Stop, this moment."

"Yes, mommy," gasped Janice. Then she added, after a shriek and a wriggle, "Don't, Tabitha!"

"What ails thee now, child? Art going to have an attack of the megrims?"

"When Tibbie laces me up she always tickles me, because she knows I'm dreadfully ticklish."

"I can't ever make the edges of the bodice meet, so I tickle to make her squirm," explained Miss Drinker.

"Go on with thy own dressing, Tabitha," ordered Mrs. Meredith, taking the strings from her hand. "Now breathe out, Janice."

Miss Meredith drew a long breath, and then expelled it, instant advantage being taken by her mother to strain the strings. "Again," she said, holding all that had been gained, and the operation was repeated, this time the edges of the frock meeting across the back.

"It hurts," complained the owner of the waist, panting, while the upper part of her bust rose and fell rapidly in an attempt to make up for the crushing of the lower lungs.

"I lose all patience with thee, Janice," cried her mother. "Here when thou hast been given by Providence a waist that would be the envy of any York woman, that thou shouldst object to clothes made to set it off to a proper advantage."

"It hurts all the same," reiterated Janice; "and last year I could beat Jacky Whitehead, but now when I try to run in my new frocks I come nigh to dying of breathlessness."

"I should hope so!" exclaimed her mother. "A female of fifteen run with a boy, indeed! The very idea is indelicate. Now, as soon as thou hast put on thy slippers and goloe-shoes, go to thy father, who has been told of thy misbehaviour, and who will reprove thee for it." And with this last damper on the "lightness of young people," as Mrs. Meredith phrased it, she once more left the room. It is a regrettable fact that Miss Janice, who had looked the picture of submission as her mother spoke, made a mouth, which was far from respectful, at the departing figure.

"Oh, Janice," said Tabitha, "will he be very severe?"

"Severe?" laughed Janice. "If dear dadda is really angry, I'll let tears come into my eyes, and then he'll say he's sorry he hurt my feelings, and kiss me; but if he's only doing it to please mommy, I'll let my eyes shine, and then he'll laugh and tell me to kiss him. Oh, Tibbie, what a nice time we could have if women were only as easy to manage as men!" With this parting regret, Miss Meredith sallied forth to receive the expected reproof.

The lecture or kiss received, — and a sight of Miss Meredith would have led the casual observer to opine that the latter was the form of punishment adopted, — the two girls mounted into the big, lumbering coach along with their elders, and were jolted and shaken over the four miles of ill-made road that separated Greenwood, the "seat," as the "New York Gazette" termed it, of the Honourable Lambert Meredith, from the village of Brunswick, New Jersey. Either this shaking, or something else, put the two maidens in a mood quite unbecoming the day, for in the moment they tarried outside the church while the coach was being placed in the shed, Miss Drinker's face was frowning, and once again Miss Meredith's nails were dug deep into the little palms of her hands.

"Yes," Janice whispered. "She put it in the fire. Dadda saw her."

"And we'll never know if Amaryllis explained that she had ever loved him," groaned Tabitha.

"If ever I get the chance!" remarked Janice, suggestively.

"Oh, Jan!" cried Tabitha, ecstatically. "Wouldn't it be delightful to be loved by a peasant, and to find he was a prince and that he had disguised himself to test thy love?"

"'T would be better fun to know he was a prince and torture him by pretending you did n't care for him," replied Janice. "Men are so teasing."

"There's Philemon Hennion doffing his hat to us, Jan."

"The great big gawk!" exclaimed Janice. "Does he want another dish of tea?" A question which set both girls laughing.

"Janice! Tabitha!" rebuked Mrs. Meredith. "Don't be flippant on the Sabbath."

The two faces assumed demureness, and, filing into the Pres-



“ They tarried outside the church. ”

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A Heroine of Many Possibilities 7

byterian meeting-house, their owners apparently gave strict heed to a sermon of the Rev. Alexander McClave, which was later issued from the press of Isaac Collins, at Burlington, under the title of:—

“The Doleful State of the Damned, Especially such as go to Hell from under the Gospel.”



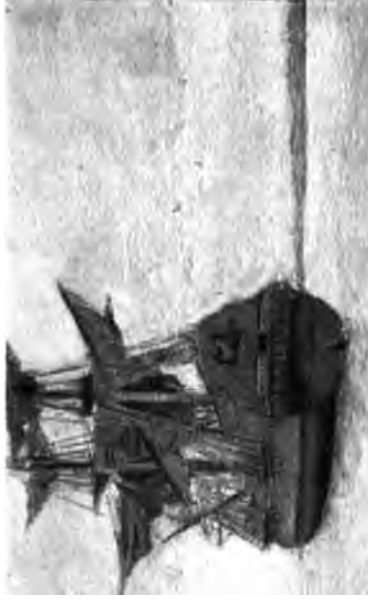
II

THE PRINCE FROM OVER THE SEAS

ACROSS the water sounded the bells of Christ Church as the anchor of the brig "Boscawen," ninety days out from Cork Harbour, fell with a splash into the Delaware River in the fifteenth year of the reign of George III., and of grace, 1774. To those on board, the chimes brought the first intimation that it was Sunday, for three months at sea with nothing to mark one day from another deranges the calendar of all but the most heedful. Among the uncouth and ill-garbed crowd that pressed against the waist-boards of the brig, looking with curious eyes toward Philadelphia, several, as the sound of the bells was heard, might have been observed to cross themselves, while one or two of the women began to tell their beads, praying perhaps that the breadth of the just-crossed Atlantic lay between them and the privation and want which had forced emigration upon them, but more likely giving thanks that the dangers and suffering of the voyage were over.

Scarcely had the anchor splashed, and before the circling ripples it started had spread a hundred feet, when a small boat put off from one of the wharfs lining the water front of the city, with the newly arrived ship as an evident destination; and the brig had barely swung to the current when the hoarse voice of the mate was heard ordering the ladder over the side. The preparation to receive the boat drew the attention of the crowd, and they stared at its occupants with an intentness which implied some deeper interest than mere curiosity; low words were exchanged, and some of the poor frightened creatures seemed to take on a greater cringe.

Seated in the sternsheets of the approaching boat was a



"Scarcely had the anchors splashed when a small boat put off."



The Prince from over the Seas 9

plainly dressed man, whose appearance so bespoke the mercantile class that it hardly needed the doffing of the captain's cap and his obsequious "your servant, Mr. Cauldwell, and good health to you," as the man clambered on board, to announce the owner of the ship. To the emigrants this sudden deference was a revelation concerning the cruel and oath-using tyrant at whose mercy they had been during the weary weeks at sea.

"A long voyage ye've made of it, Captain Caine," said the merchant.

"Ay, sir," answered the captain. "Another ten days would have put us short of water, and —"

"But not of rum? Eh?" interrupted Cauldwell.

"As for that," replied the captain, "there's a bottle or two that's rolled itself till 't is cruelty not to drink it, and if you'll test a noggin in the cabin while taking a look at the manifests —"

"Well answered," cried the merchant, adding, "I see ye set deep."

"Ay," said the captain as they went toward the companion-way; "too deep for speed or safety, but the factors care little for sailors' lives."

"And a deep ship makes a deep purse."

"Or a deep grave."

"Wouldst die ashore, man?"

"God forbid!" ejaculated the mariner, in a frightened voice. "I've had my share of ill-luck without lying in the cold ground. The very thought goes through me like a dash of spray in a winter v'y'ge." He stamped with his foot and roared out, "Forrard there: Two glasses and a dipper from the rundlet," at the same time opening a locker and taking therefrom a squat bottle. "'T is enough to make a man bowse himself kissing black Betty to think of being under ground." He held the black bottle firmly, as if it were in fact a sailor's life preserver from such a fate, and hastened, so soon as the cabin-boy appeared with the glasses and dipper, to mix two glasses of rum and water. Setting these on the table, he took from the locker a bundle of papers, and handed it to the merchant.

Twenty minutes were spent on the clearances and manifests, and then Mr. Cauldwell opened yet another paper.

"Sixty-two in all," he said, with a certain satisfaction in his voice.

"Sixty-three," corrected the captain.

"Not by the list," denied the merchant.

"Sixty-two from Cork Harbour, but we took one aboard ship at Bristol," explained the captain.

"Ye must pack them close between decks."

"Ay. The shoats in the long boat had more room. Mr. Bull-dog would none of it, but slept on deck the whole v'y'ge."

"Mr. Bull-dog?" queried Cauldwell.

"The one your factor shipped at Bristol," explained Caine, and running over the bundle, he spread before the merchant the following paper:—

This Indenture, Made the Tenth Day of March in the fifteenth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the third King of Great Britain, etc. And in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and seventy-four, Between Charles Fownes of Bath in the County of Somerset Labourer of the one Part, and Frederick Caine of Bristol Mariner of the other part Witnesseth That the said Charles Fownes for the Consideration hereinafter mentioned, hath, and by these Presents doth Covenant, Grant and Agree to, and with the said Frederick Caine, his Executors, Administrators and Assigns, That the said Charles Fownes shall and will, as a Faithful Covenant Servant well and truly serve said Frederick Caine his Executors, Administrators or Assigns, in the Plantations of Pennsylvania and New Jersey beyond the Seas, for the space of five years next ensuing the Arrival in the said Plantation, in the Employment of a servant. And the said Charles Fownes doth hereby Covenant and declare himself, now to be of the age of Twenty-one Years and no Covenant or Contract Servant to any Person or Persons. And the said Frederick Caine for himself his Executors, and Assigns, in Consideration thereof do hereby Covenant, Promise and Agree to and with the said Charles Fownes his Executors and Administrators, that he the said Frederick Caine his Executors, Administrators or Assigns, shall and will at his or their own proper Cost and Charges, with what Convenient Speed they may, carry and convey or cause to be carried

This Indenture, Made the Twenty Day of November 1699, in the Seventh Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord Charles the Second King of Great Britain, &c. And in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy four Between Charles the Bishop of the one Part, and Frederick Baker of London Merchant

Witnesseth That the said Charles the Bishop for the Consideration herein after mentioned, hath, and by these Presents doth Covenant, Grant and Agree to, and with the said Frederick Baker his Executors, Administrators and Assigns, That he the said Charles the Bishop doth hereby Covenant and declare himself, well and truly to serve Frederick Baker his Executors, Administrators or Assigns, in the Plantation of Virginia beyond the Seas, for the Space of Five Years next ensuing his Arrival in the said Plantation, in the Employment of a Master And the said Charles the Bishop doth hereby Covenant and declare himself, now to be of the Age of Eighteen Years And the said Charles the Bishop for himself, his Executors, Administrators, and Assigns, in Consideration thereof do hereby Covenant, Promise and Agree to and with the said Frederick Baker his Executors and Administrators, that he the said Frederick Baker his Executors, Administrators or Assigns, shall and will at his or their own proper Cost and Charges, with what convenient Speed they may, carry and convey or cause to be carried and conveyed over unto the said Plantation, the said Charles the Bishop and from henceforth and during the said voyage, and also during the said Term, shall and will at the like Cost and Charges, provide and allow the said Charles the Bishop all necessary Provision Meat, Drink, Washing, and Lodging, firing and convenient for him as Covenant Servants in such Cases are usually provided for and allowed

And for the true Performance of the Premises, the said Parties to these Presents bind themselves, their Executors and Administrators, the either to the other, in the Penal Sum of Twenty Pounds Sterling, firmly by these Presents. In Witness whereof, they have hereunto interchangeably set their Hands and Seals, this Day and Year above written.

Sealed and delivered
in the Presence of

Walter
Robertson
Thomas
Charles
Arthur

These are to certify, That the above-named Charles the Bishop came before Me Thomas the Mayor Deputy to the Patentee at London the Day and Year above-written, and declared himself to be Frederick Baker no Covenant nor Contracted Servant to any Person or Persons, to be of the Age of Eighteen Years, nor Kidnapped or Induced, but desirous to serve the above-named Frederick Baker or his Assigns, Five Years, according to the Tenor of the Indenture above-written. All which is Registered in the Office for that Purpose, appointed by the Letters Patents. In Witness whereof, I have hereunto affixed the common Seal of the said Office.

Thomas the Mayor

Indenture of a Colonial bond-servant.

The Prince from over the Seas 11

and conveyed over unto the said Plantations, the said Charles Fownes and also during the said Term, shall and will at the like Cost and Charges, provide and allow the said Charles Fownes all necessary Cloaths, Meat, Drink, Washing, and Lodging, and Fitting and Convenient for him as Covenant Servants in such Cases are usually provided for and allowed. And for the true Performance of the Premises, the said Parties to these Presents, bind themselves their Executors and Administrators, the either to the other, in the Penal Sum of Thirty Pounds Sterling, by these Presents. In Witness whereof they have hereunto interchangeably set their Hands and Seals, the Day and Year above written.

The mark of

CHARLES X FOWNES [Seal].

*Sealed and delivered in
the presence of*

J. PATTISON, C. CAPON.

These are to certify that the above-named Charles Fownes came before me Thomas Pattison Deputy to the Patentee at Bristol the Day and Year above written, and declared himself to be no Covenant nor Contracted Servant to any Person or Persons, to be of the Age of Twenty-one Years, not kidnapped nor enticed, but desirous to serve the above-named or his assigns five Years, according to the Tenor of his Indenture above written. All of which is Registered in the office for that Purpose appointed by the Letters Patents. In witness whereof I have affixed the common Seal of the said office.

THOMAS PATTISON, D. P.

“And why Mr. Bull-dog?” asked Cauldwell, after a glance at the paper.

“By the airs he takes. Odd’s life! if we’d had the Duke of Cumberland aboard, he’d not have carried himself the stiffer. From the day we shipped him, not so much as a word has he passed with one of us, save to threat Mr. Higgins’ life, when he knocked him down with a belying pin for his da—for his impertinence. And he nothing but an indentured servant not able to write his name and like as not with a sheriff at his

heels." The captain's sudden volubility could mean either dislike or mere curiosity.

"Dost think he's of the wrong colour?" asked the merchant, looking with more interest at the covenant.

"'T is the dev — 't is beyond me to say what he is. A good man at the ropes, but a da — a Dutchman for company. 'T wixt he and the bog-trotters we shipped at Cork Harbour 't was the dev — 't was the scuttiest lot I ever took aboard ship." The rum was getting into the captain's tongue, and making his usual vocabulary difficult to keep under.

"Have ye no artisans among the Irish?"

"Not so much as one who knows the differ between his two hands."

"'T is too bad of Gorman not to pick better," growled the merchant. "There's a great demand for Western settlers, and Mr. Lambert Meredith writes me to pick him up a good man at horses and gardening, without stinting the price. 'T would be something to me to oblige him."

"'T is a parcel of raw teagues except for the Bristol man."

"And ye think he's of the light-fingered gentry?"

"As for that," said the captain, "I know nothing about him. But he came to your factor and wanted to take the first ship that cleared, and seemed in such a mortal pother that Mr. Horsley suspicioned something, and gave me a slant to look out for him. And all the time we lay off Bristol, my fine fellow kept himself well out of sight."

"Come," said the merchant, rising, "we'll have a look at him. Mr. Meredith is not a man to be disappointed if it can be avoided."

Once on deck the captain led the way to the forepart of the ship, where, standing by himself, and, like the other emigrants, looking over the rail, but, unlike them, looking not at the city, but at the water, stood a fellow of a little over medium height, with broad shoulders and a well-shaped back, despite the ill form his ragged coat tried to give it. At a slap on the shoulder he turned about, showing to the merchant a ruddy, sea-tanned skin, light brown hair, gray eyes, and a chin and mouth hidden by a two months' beard, still too bristly to give him other than an unkempt, boorish look.



“Standing by himself, looking o-ver the rail.”



"Here's the rogue," announced the captain, with a suggestion of challenge in the speech, as if he would like to have the epithet resented. But the man only regarded the officer with steady, inexpressive eyes.

"Now, my good fellow," asked the merchant, "to what kind of work have ye been bred?"

The steady gray eyes were turned deliberately from the captain until the questioner was within their vision. Then, after a moment's scrutiny of his face, they were slowly dropped so as to take in the merchant from head to foot. Finally they came back to the face again, and once more studied it with intentness, though apparently without the slightest interest.

"Come," said the merchant a little heatedly, and flushing at the man's coolness. "Answer me. Are ye used to horses and gardening?"

As if he had not heard the question, the man turned, and resumed his staring at the water.

"None of your damned impertinence!" roared the captain, catching up the free part of a halyard coiled on the deck, "or I'll give you a taste of the rope's end."

The young fellow faced about in sudden passion, which strangely altered him. "Strike me at your peril!" he challenged, his arm drawn back, and fist clinched for a blow.

"None but a jail-bird would be so afraid of telling about himself," cried the captain, though ceasing to threaten. "The best thing you can do will be to turn the cursed son of a sea cook over to the authorities, Mr. Cauldwell."

"Look ye, my man," warned the merchant, "ye only bring suspicion on yourself by such conduct, and ye know best how far ye want to have your past searched into —"

The man interrupted the merchant.

"Ar bain't much usen to gardening, but ar knows —" he hesitated for a moment and then went on, "but ar bai willin' to work."

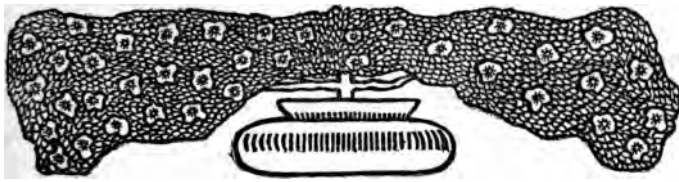
"Ay," bawled the captain. "Fear of the courts has made him find his tongue."

"Well," remarked the merchant, "'t is not for my interest to look too closely at a man I have for sale." Then, as he walked away with the captain, he continued: "Many a convict

or fugitive has come to the straightabout out here, but hang me if I like his looks or his manner. However, Mr. Meredith knows the pot-luck of redemptioners as well as I, and he can say nay if he chooses." He stopped and eyed the group of emigrants sourly, saying, "I'll let Gorman hear what I think of his shipment. He knows I don't want mere bog cattle."

"'T is a poor consignment that can't be bettered in the advertisement," comforted the captain, and apparently he spoke truly, for in the "Pennsylvania Gazette" of September 7th appeared the following : —

"Just arrived on board the brig 'Boscawen,' Alexander Caine, Master from Ireland, a number of likely, healthy, men and women Servants; among whom are Taylors, Barbers, Joiners, Weavers, Shoemakers, Sewers, Labourers, etc., etc., whose indentures are to be disposed of by Cauldwell & Wilson, or the master on board the Vessel off Market Street Wharff— Said Cauldwell & Wilson will give the highest prices for good Pot-Ashes and Bees-Wax."



III

MISS MEREDITH DISCOVERS A VILLAIN

BREAKFAST at Greenwood was a pleasant meal at a pleasant hour. For some time previous to it, the family were up and doing, Mr. Meredith riding over his farm directing his labourers, Mrs. Meredith giving a like supervision to her housekeeping, and Janice, attired in a wash dress well covered by a vast apron, with the aid of her guest, making the beds, tidying the parlour, and not unlikely mixing cake or some dessert in the kitchen. Before the meal, Mr. Meredith replaced his rough riding coat by one of broadcloth, with lace ruffles, while the working gowns of the ladies were discarded for others of silk, made, in the parlance of the time, "sack" fashion, or without waist, and termed "an elegant *négligée*," — this word being applied to any frock without lacing strings.

Thus clothed, they gathered at seven o'clock in the pleasant, low-ceiled dining-room whose French windows, facing westward, gave glimpses of the Raritan, over fields of stubble and corn-stacks, broken by patches of timber and orchard. On the table stood a tea service of silver, slender in outline, and curiously light in weight, though generous in capacity. Otherwise, a silver tankard for beer, standing at Mr. Meredith's place beside a stone jug filled with home brew, balanced by another jug filled with buttermilk, was all that tended to decoration, the knives and forks being of steel, and the china simplicity itself. For the edibles, a couple of smoked herring, a comb of honey, and a bunch of water-cress, re-enforced after the family had taken their seats by a form of smoking cornbread, was the simple fare set forth. But the early rising, and two hours of work, brought hunger to the table which required nothing more elaborate as a fillip to tempt the appetite.

While the family still lingered over the meal one warm

September morning, as if loth to make further exertion in the growing heat, the sound of a knocker was heard, and a moment later the coloured maid returned and announced : —

“Marse Hennion want see Marse Meredith.”

“Bring him in here, Peg,” said Mr. Meredith. “Like as not the lad ’s not breakfasted.”

Janice hunched her shoulders and remarked, “Never fear that Master Hennion is not hungry. He is like the roaring lion, who ‘walketh about seeking whom he may devour.’ ”

“Black shame on thee, Janice Meredith, for applying the Holy Word to carnal things,” cried her mother.

“Then let me read novels,” muttered Miss Meredith, but so indistinctly as not to be understood.

“Be still, child !” commanded her mother.

“And listen to Philemon glub-glub-bing over his victuals ?”

“Philemon is no pig,” declared Mrs. Meredith.

“No,” assented Janice. “He ’s too old for that,” — a remark which set Mr. Meredith off into an uproarious haw-haw.

“Lambert,” protested his wife, “I lose patience with thee for encouraging this stiff-necked and wayward girl, when she should be thankful that Providence has made one man who wants so saucy a Miss Prat-a-pace for a wife.”

Miss Meredith, evidently encouraged by her father’s humour, made a mouth, and droned in a sing-song voice : “‘What doth every sin deserve? Every sin deserveth God’s wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.’ ” Such a desecration of the Westminster Assembly of Divines’ “Shorter Catechism” would doubtless have produced further and severer reproof from Mrs. Meredith, but the censure was prevented by the clump of heavy boots, followed by the entrance of an over-tall, loosely-built fellow of about eighteen years, whose clothes rather hung about than fitted him.

“Your servant, marms,” was his greeting, as he struggled to make a bow. “Your servant, squire. Mr. Hitchins, down ter Trenton, where I went yestere’en with a bale of shearings, asked me ter come araound your way with a letter an’ a bond-servant that come ter him on a hay-sloop from Philadelphia. So — ”

“Having nothing better to do, you came ?” interrupted Janice, with a gravely courteous manner.

Miss Meredith Discovers a Villain 17

"That's it, Miss Janice ; I'm obleeged ter you for sayin' it better nor I could," said the young fellow, gratefully, while manifestly straining to get a letter from his pocket.

"Hast breakfasted, Phil?" asked the squire.

Producing the letter with terrible effort, and handing it to Mr. Meredith, Hennion began, "As for that —"

Here Janice interrupted by saying, "You breakfasted in Trenton—what a pity!"

"Janice!" snapped her mother, warningly. "Cease thy clack and set a chair for Philemon this instant."

That individual tried to help the girl, but he was not quick enough, except to get awkwardly in the way, and bring his shins in sharp contact with the edge of the chair. Uttering an exclamation of pain, he dropped his hat, — a proceeding which set the two girls off into ill-suppressed giggles. But finally, relieved of his tormenting head-gear, he was safely seated, and Janice set the dishes in front of him, from all of which he helped himself liberally. Meanwhile, the squire broke the seal of the letter and began to read it.

"Wilt have tea or home brew?" asked Mrs. Meredith.

"Beer for me, marm, thank you. An' I think it only kindly ter say I've hearn talk concernin' your tea drinkin'."

"Let 'em talk," muttered the squire, angrily, looking up from the letter. "'T is nothing to me."

"But Joe Bagby says there's a scheme ter git the committee of Brunswick township ter take it up."

"Not they," fumed Mr. Meredith. "'T is one thing to write anonymous letters, but quite another matter to stand up and be counted. As for that scamp Joe —"

"Anonymous letters?" questioned Philemon.

"Ay," sputtered the squire, taking from his pocket a paper which he at once crushed into a ball, and then as promptly smoothed out again as a preliminary to handing it to the youth. With difficulty, for the writing was bad, and the paper old and dirty, Philemon read out the following: —

MISTER MURIDITH, —

Noing that agenst the centyments of younited Amurika you still kontinyou to youse tea, thairfor, this is to worn you that

we konsider you as an enemy of our kuntry, and if the same praktises are kontinyoud, you will shortly receeve a visit from the kommitty of

TAR AND FETHERS,

Brunswick Township.

"The villains!" cried Janice, flushing. "Who can have dared to send it?"

"One of my tenants, like as not," snapped the squire.

"They'd never dare," asserted Janice.

"Dare!" cried the squire. "What daring does it take to write unsigned threats and nail 'em at night on a door? They get more lawless every day, with their committees and town meetings and mobs. 'Tis next to impossible to make 'em pay their rents now, and to hear 'em talk ye'd conclude that they owned their farms and could not be turned off. A pretty state of things when a man with twenty thousand acres under leaseholds has to beg for his rentals, and then does n't get 'em."

"You'd find it easier ter git your rents, squire, if you only sided more with folks, an' wa'n't so stiff," suggested the youth. "A little yieldin' now an' then —"

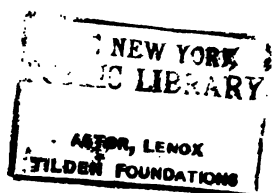
"Never!" roared Mr. Meredith. "I'll have no Committee of Correspondence, nor Sons of Liberty, nor Town Meeting telling me what I may do or not do at Greenwood, any more than I let the ragtag and bobtail tell me what I was to buy in '69. Till I say nay, tea is drunk at Greenwood," and the squire's fist came down on the table with a bang.

"Folks say that Congress will shut up the ports," said the young man.

"Ay. And British frigates will open 'em. The people are mad, sir, Bedlam mad, with the idea of liberty, as they call it. Liberty, indeed! when they try to say what a man shall do in his own house; what he shall eat; what he shall wear. And this Congress! We, A and B, elect C to say what the rest of the alphabet shall do, under penalty of tar and feathers, burned ricks, or — don't talk to me, sir, of a Congress. 'Tis but an attempt of the mobility to override the nobility of this land, sir." Once again the plates rattled on the table from the squire's fist, and it became evident that if Miss Meredith had a temper it came by inheritance.



"Fouones took a quick, almost furtive survey of the room."



Miss Meredith Discovers a Villain 19

"Now, Lambert," interposed his wife, "stop banging the table and getting hot about nothing. Remember how thee hadst the colonies ruined in Stamp Act times, and again during the Association, and it all went over, just as this will. Pour thy father another tankard of small beer, Janice."

Clearly, what the Committee of Correspondence, and even the approaching Congress could not do, Mrs. Meredith could, for the squire settled back quietly into his chair, took a long swallow of beer, and resumed his letter.

"What does Mr. Cauldwell say, dadda?" inquired the daughter.

"Hmm," said Mr. Meredith. "That he sends me the likeliest one from his last shipment. What sort of fellow is he, Phil?"

Hennion paused to swallow an over-large mouthful, which almost produced a choking fit, before he could reply. "He han't a civil word about him, squire — a regular sullen dog."

"Cauldwell writes guardedly, saying it was the best he could do. Where d' ye leave him, lad?"

"Outside, in my waggon."

"Peg, bid him to come in. We'll have a look at —" Mr. Meredith consulted the covenant enclosed and read, "Charles Fownes, heigh?"

A moment later, preceded by the maid, Fownes entered. He took a quick, almost furtive, survey of the room, then glanced in succession at each of those seated about the table, till his eyes rested on Janice. There they fixed themselves in a bold, unconcealed scrutiny, to the no small embarrassment of the maiden, though the man himself stood in an easy, unconstrained attitude, quite unheeding the five pairs of eyes staring at him, or, if conscious, entirely unembarrassed by them.

"Well, Charles, Mr. Cauldwell writes me that ye don't know much about horses or gardening, but he thinks ye have parts and can pick it up quickly."

Still keeping his eyes on Miss Meredith, Fownes nodded his head, with a short, quick jerk, far from respectful.

"But he also says ye are a surly, hot-tempered fellow, who may need a touch of a whip now and again."

Without turning his head, a second time the man gave a jerk

of it, conveying an idea of assent, but it was the assent of contempt far more than of accord.

"Come, come," ordered the squire, testily. "Let's have a sound of your tongue. Is Mr. Cauldwell right?"

Still looking at Miss Meredith, the man shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "Bain't vor the loikes of ar to zay Mister Cauldwell bai a liar." Yet the voice and manner left little doubt in the hearers as to the speaker's private opinion, and Janice laughed, partly at the implication, but more in nervousness.

"What kind of work are ye used to?" asked Mr. Meredith.

The man hesitated for a moment and then muttered crossly, "Ar indentured vor to work, not to bai questioned."

"Then work ye shall have," cried the squire, hotly. "Peg, show him the stable, and tell Tom —"

"One moment, Lambert," interjected his wife, and then she asked, "Hast thou had breakfast, Charles?"

Fownes shook his head sullenly.

"Take him to the kitchen and give him some at once, Peg," ordered Mrs. Meredith.

For the first time the fellow looked away from Janice, fixing his eyes on Mrs. Meredith. Then he bowed easily and gracefully, saying, "Thank you." Apparently unconscious that for a moment he had left the Somerset burr off his tongue and the rustic pretence from his manner, he followed Peg to the kitchen.

If he were unconscious of the slip, it was more than were his auditors, and for a moment they all exchanged glances in silent bewilderment.

"Humph!" finally growled the squire. "I like the look of him still less."

"He holds himself like a gentleman," asserted Tabitha.

"This fellow will need close watching," predicted Mr. Meredith. "He's no yokel. He moves like a gentleman or a house-servant. Yet he had to make his mark on the covenant."

"I think, dadda," said Miss Meredith, in her most calmly judicial manner, "that the new man is a born villain, and has committed some terrible crime. He has a horrid, wicked face, and he stares just as — as — so that one wants to shiver."



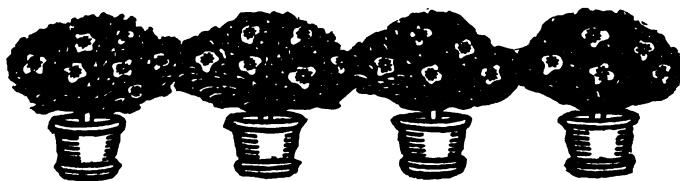
"Miss Meredith took her seat at the spinet"



Miss Meredith Discovers a Villain 21

Mrs. Meredith rose. "Janice," she chided, "thou't too young to make thy opinions of the slightest value. Go to thy spinet, child, and don't let me hear any more such foolish babble. Charles has a good face, and will make a good servant."

"I don't care what mommy thinks," Miss Meredith confided to Tabitha in the parlour, as the one took her seat at an embroidery frame and the other at the spinet. "I know he's a bad man, and will end by killing one of us and stealing the silver and a horse, just as Mr. Vreeland's bond-servant did. He makes me think of the villain in 'The Tragic History of Sir Watkins Stokes and Lady Betty Artless.'"



IV

AN APPLE OF DISCORD

IN the week following his advent the new servant was the cause of considerable discussion, and, regrettably, of not a little controversy, among the members of the household of Greenwood. The squire maintained that "the fellow is a bad-tempered, lazy, deceitful rogue, in need of much watching." Mrs. Meredith, on the contrary, invariably praised the man, and promptly suppressed her husband whenever he began to rail against him. To Janice, with the violent prejudices of youth still unmodified by experience and reason, Charles was almost a special deputy of the individual she heard so unmercifully thrashed to tatters each Sunday by the Rev. Mr. McClave. And again, to the contrary, Tabitha insisted with growing fervour that the servant was a gentleman, possessed of all the qualities that word implied, plus the most desirable attribute of all others to eighteenth-century maidens, a romantic possibility.

As a matter of fact, these diverse and contradictory views had a crossing-point, and accepting this as their mean, Charles proved himself to be a knowing man with horses, an entirely ignorant and by no means eager labourer in the little farm work there was to do, a silent though easily angered being with every one save Mrs. Meredith, and so clearly above his station that he was viewed with disfavour, tintured by not a little fear, by house-servants, by field hands, and even by Mr. Meredith's overseer.

For the most part, Fownes spoke in the West of England dialect; but whenever he became interested, this instantly slipped from him, as did his still more ineffective attempt to move and act the rustic. Indeed, the ease of his movements and the straightness of his carriage, with a certain indefinable precision of manner, led to a common agreement among his fellow-

labourers that he had earlier in life accepted the king's shilling. Granting him to be but one and twenty years of age, as his covenant stated, and as in fact he looked, his service must have been shorter than the act of Parliament allowed, and this seeming bar to their hypothesis caused many winks and shrugs over the tankards of ale consumed of an evening at the King George tavern in the village of Brunswick. Furthermore, for some months the deserter columns of such stray numbers of the "London Gazette" as occasionally drifted to the ordinary were eagerly scanned by the loungers, on the possibility that they might contain some advertisement of a fellow standing five feet ten, with broad shoulders, light brown hair, straight nose, and gray eyes, whose whereabouts was of interest to His Majesty's War Office, Whitehall. Neither from this source, however, nor from any other, did they gain the slightest clue to the past history of the bond-servant, spy upon the fellow who would.

Nor was talk of the man limited to farm hands and tavern idlers, for dearth of new topics in the little community made him a subject of converse to the two girls during the hours of spinet practice, embroidery, and sewing, which were their daily occupations between breakfast and dinner, and, even extended into the afternoon, if the stint was not completed. Yet all their discussion brought them no nearer to agreement, Janice maintaining that Fownes was a villain *in posse*, if not *in esse*, while Tabitha contended that Charles had been disappointed in a love which he still, none the less, cherished, and which to her mind accounted in every particular for his conduct. As such a theory allowed considerable scope to the imagination, she promptly created several romances about him, in all of which he was of noble birth, with such other desirable factors as made him a true hero; and having thus endowed him with a halo of romance, she could not find words strong enough to express her thorough-going contempt for the woman whose disregard and cruelty had driven him across the seas.

"Thee knows, Janice," she argued, when the latter expressed scepticism, "that the Earl of Anglesey was kidnapped, and sold in Maryland, so it's perfectly possible for a nobleman to be a bond-servant."

"That's the one case," answered Janice, sagely.

"But things like it are very common in novels," insisted Tabitha. "And what is more likely for a man disappointed in love than, in desperation, to indenture himself?"

"I can easily credit a female of taste — yes, any female — refusing the ill-mannered, bold-staring rogue," said Janice, giving the coarse osnaburg shirt she was working upon a fretted jerk; "but to suppose him to be capable of a grand, devoted passion is as bad as expecting — expecting faithfulness in a dog like Clarion."

"Clarion?" questioned Tabitha.

"Yes. Have n't you seen how — how — that he — the man, has taken possession of him? Thomas says the two sneak off together every chance they get, and sometimes are n't back till eleven or twelve. I wish dad would put a stop to it. Like as not, 't is for pilfering they are bound." Miss Meredith began anew on the buttonhole, and had she been thrusting her needle into either man or dog, she could not have sewed with a more vicious vigour.

"That must be the way he got those rabbits for thy mother."

"I should know he had been a poacher," asserted Janice, as she contemptuously held up and surveyed at arms-length the completed shirt. Then she laid it aside with another, and sighed a weary, "Heigh-ho, those are done. Here I have to work my fingers to the bone making shirts for him, just because mommy says he has n't enough clothes," — a sentence which perhaps partly accounted for the maiden's somewhat jaundiced view of Charles.

"Are those for him?" cried Tabitha. "Why didst thou not tell me? I would have helped thee with them."

"You'd have been welcome to the whole job. As it is, I've done them so carelessly that I know mommy will scold me. But I was n't going to work myself to death for him!"

"I should have loved — I like shirt-making," fibbed Tabitha.

"And I hate it! Forty-two have I made this year, and mommy has six more cut out."

There was a moment's silence, and then Tabitha said, "Janice." For some reason the name seemed to embarrass her, for the moment it was spoken she coloured.

"What?"

"Dost thee not think—perhaps—if we steal out and take the shirts to the stable, thy mother will never—?"

"Tibbie Drinker! Go out of the house in a sack? I'd as soon go out in my night-rail."

"Thee breakfasts in a *negligé*, even when Philemon is here," retorted Miss Drinker. "Wouldst as lief breakfast in thy shift?"

"No," said Miss Janice, with a wicked sparkle in her eyes, "because if I did Philemon would come oftener than ever."

"Fie upon thee, Janice Meredith!" cried her friend, "for a froward, indelicate female."

"And why more indelicate than the men who'd come?" demanded Janice.

"Immodest words admit of no defence,
For want of modesty is want of sense,"

quoted Miss Drinker.

"Rubbish!" scoffed Janice, but whether she was referring to the stanza of the reigning poet of the eighteenth century, or simply to Miss Tabitha's application of it, cannot be definitely known. "You know as well as I, Tibbie, that I'd rather have Philemon, or any other man, see me in my shroud than in my rail. Come, we'll change our frocks and take a walk."

A half hour later, newly clothed in light dimity gowns, cut short for walking, and which, in combination with slippers, then the invariable footgear of ladies of quality, served to display the "neatly turned ankles" that the beaux of the period so greatly admired, the girls sallied forth. First a visit was paid to the stable, to smuggle the shirts from the criticism of Mrs. Meredith, as well as to entice Clarion's companionship for the walk. But Thomas, with a grumble, told them that Fownes had stolen away from the job that had been set for him after dinner, and that the hound had gone with him.

Their rambling walk brought the girls presently to the river, but just as they were about to force their way through the fringe of willows and underbrush which hid the water from view, a sudden loud splashing, telling of some one in swimming, gave them pause. Yelps of excitement from Clarion a moment

later served to tell the two who it probably was, and the probability was instantly confirmed by the voice of Charles, saying :

"'T is sport, old man, is 't not? To get the dirt and transpiration off one ! 'S death ! What a climate ! 'Twixt the sun and osnaburg and fustian my skin feels as if I 'd been triced up and had a round hundred."

Exchanging glances, the girls stole softly away from the bank, neither venturing to speak till out of hearing. As they retired they came upon a heap of coarse garments, and Tabitha, catching the arm of her friend, exclaimed : —

"Oh, Jan, look !"

What had caught her eye was the end of a light gold chain that appeared among the clothes, and both girls halted and gazed at it as if it possessed some quality of fascination. Then Tabitha tip-toed forward, with but too obvious a purpose.

"Tibbie !" rebuked Janice, "you should n't !"

"Oh, but Jan !" protested Eve, junior. "'T is such a chance !"

"Not for me," asserted Miss Meredith, proudly virtuous, as she walked on.

If Miss Drinker had searched for a twelve-month she could scarce have found a more provoking remark than her spontaneous exclamation, "Oh ! how beautiful she is !"

Janice halted, though she had the moral stamina not to turn.

"What? The chain?" she asked.

"No ! The miniature," responded her interlocutor, in a tone expressing the most unbounded admiration and delight. "Such an elegant creature, Jan, and such —"

Her speech ended there, as a crashing in the bushes alarmed her, and she darted past Janice, who, infected by the guilt of her companion, likewise broke into a run, which neither ceased till they had covered a goodly distance. Then Tabitha, for want of breath, came to a stop, and allowed her friend to overtake her.

She held up the chain and miniature in her hand. "What shall I do?" she panted.

"Tibbie, how could you?" ejaculated her horrified friend.

"His coming frightened me so that — oh, I did n't drop it !"

"You must take it back!"

"I'd never dare!"

"Black shame on —!"

"A nice creature, thou, Jan!" interrupted Miss Drinker, with a sudden carrying of the war into the enemy's camp. "To tell me to go back when he's sure to be dressing! No wonder thee makes indelicate speeches."

Miss Meredith, without deigning to reply to this shameful implication, walked away toward the house.

That Tibbie intended to shirk the consequences of her misdemeanour was only too clearly proved to Janice, when later she went to her room to prink for supper, for lying on her dressing stand was the miniature. Shocked as Miss Meredith was at the sight, she lifted and examined the trinket.

Bred in colonial simplicity, it seemed to the maid that she had never seen anything quite so exquisite. A gold case, richly set with brilliants, encompassed the portrait of a girl of very positive beauty. After a rapt dwelling on the portrait for some minutes, further examination revealed the letters W. H. J. B. interlaced on the back.

Taking the miniature when her toilet had been perfected, Janice descended to the parlour. As she entered, Tabitha, already there, jumped up from a chair, in which, a moment previous she had been carrying on a brown study that apparently was not enjoyable, and tripped nonchalantly across the room to the spinet. Seating herself, she struck the keys, and broke out into a song entitled, "Taste Life's Glad Moments as They Glide."

Not in the least deflected from her intention, Miss Meredith marched up to the culprit, the bondsman's property in her hand, and demanded, "Dost intend to turn thief?"

"Prithee, who's curious now?" evaded Tibbie. "I knew thee'd look at it, for all thy airs."

"Very well, miss," threatened Janice, with much dignity. "Then I shall take it to him, and narrate to him all the circumstances."

"Tattle-tale, tattle-tale!" retorted Tabitha, scornfully.

With even greater scorn her friend turned her back, and leaving the house, walked toward the stable. This took her

through the old-fashioned, hedge-begirt kitchen garden, in which flowers were grown as if they were vegetables, and vegetables were grown as if they were flowers. The moment Janice had passed within the tall row of box, her expression of mingled haughtiness and determination ended ; she came to a sudden halt, said "Oh !" and then pretended to be greatly interested in a butterfly. The bravest army can be stampeded by a surprise, and after having screwed up her spirit to the point of facing Fownes in his fortress, the stable, Miss Meredith's courage deserted her on almost stumbling over him a hundred yards nearer than she expected. So taken aback was she that all the glib explanation she had planned was forgotten, and she held out the miniature to him without a single word.

Charles had been walking to the house, and only paused at meeting Miss Meredith. He glanced at the outstretched hand, and then let his eyes come back to the girl's face, without making the slightest motion to take his property.

Tongue-tied and doubly embarrassed by his calm scrutiny, the young lady stood with flushed cheeks, and with long black lashes dropped to hide a pair of very shamed eyes, the personification, in appearance, of guilt.

Whether the girl would have found her tongue, or would have ended the incident as she was longing to do by taking to her heels, it is impossible to say. Ere she had time to do either, the angry voice of the squire broke in upon them.

"Ho, there ye are ! Twice have I looked for ye this afternoon, and I warn ye I'm not the man to take such conduct from any one, least of all from one of my own servants," he said as he came toward the pair, the emphasis of his walking stick and his heels both telling the story of his anger. "What mean ye, fellow," he continued, "by neglecting the work I set ye ?"

Absolutely unmoved by the reproof, Charles stood as heedless of it as he had been of the outstretched hand of the daughter, a hand which had promptly disappeared in the folds of Miss Meredith's skirt at the first sound of her father's voice.

"A taste of my walking stick ye should have if ye had your deserts !" went on the squire, now face to face with the servant.

Without taking his eyes from the girl, Charles laughed. "Is it fear of me," he challenged, "or fear of the law that prevents you?"

"What know ye of the law, sirrah?" demanded Mr. Meredith.

"Nothing, when I was fool enough to indenture myself," snapped the servant; "but Bagby tells me that 't is forbidden, under penalty of fine, for a master to strike a servant."

"Joe Bagby!" roared the squire, more angry than ever. "And how come ye to have anything to do with that scampy lawyer! Hast been up to some mischief already?"

Again the man laughed. "That is for His Majesty's Justices of the Peace to discover. Till they do, I shall maintain that I consulted him concerning the laws governing bond-servants."

"A pretty state the country's come to!" raged the squire. "No wonder there is no governing the land, when even servants think to have the law against their masters. But, harkee, my fine fellow. If I may not punish ye myself, the Justices may order ye whipped, and unless ye change your manners I will have ye up before their next sitting. Meantime, saddle Joggles as soon as supper is done, and take this paper over to Brunswick, and post it on the proclamation board of the Town Hall. And no tarrying, and consulting of tricky lawyers, understand. If ye are not back by nine, ye shall hear from me."

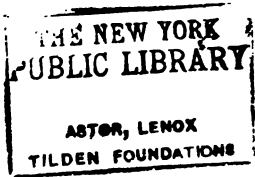
Striking a sunflower with his cane as a slight vent to his anger, the master strode away to the house.

His back turned, Janice once again held out the miniature. "Won't you please take it?" she begged.

"Art tired of it already?" jeered the man.

"I did not take it, Charles," she stammered, "but I knew of its taking and so brought it back to you."

The man shrugged his shoulders. "'T is not mine, nor is it aught to me," he said, and passing the girl, walked to the house.



attention to him. A Reward of two pounds will be given for any information leading to the discovery of said cowardly villain.

LAMBERT MEREDITH.

For a moment the servant stood with a slight smile on his face at the contradiction ; then, with a shrug of his shoulders, he entered the public room of the tavern. Within the air was so thick with pipes in full blast, and the light of the two dips was so feeble, that he halted in order to distinguish the dozen figures of the occupants, all of whom gave him instant attention.

"Ar want landlord," he said, after a pause.

"Here I be," responded a man sitting at a small table in the corner, with two half-emptied glasses and a bowl of arrack punch before him. Opposite to mine host was a thick-set man of about forty, attired in a brown suit and heavy top-boots, both of which bore the signs of recent travel.

The servant skirted the group at the large table in the centre of the room, and taking from his pocket a guinea, laid it on the table. "Canst 'e give change for thickey?" he asked.

"I vum!" cried the landlord, as he picked up the coin and rang it on the table. "'T ain't often we git sight o' goold here. How much do yer want fer it?"

"Why, twenty-one shillings," replied the servant, with some surprise in his voice.

"I'll givit you dirty-two," spoke up a Jewish-looking man at the big table, hurriedly pulling out his pouch and counting down a batch of very soiled money from it, which he held out to the servant just as the landlord, too, tendered him some equally ragged bills.

"Trust Opper to give a shilling less than its worth," jeered one of the drinkers.

"Bai thickey money, Bagby?" questioned Charles, looking suspiciously at both tenders.

"Not much," answered Bagby from the group about the large table, not one of whom had missed a word of the foregoing conversation. "'T is shaved beef,"—a joke which called forth not a little laughter from his companions.

"Will it buy a razor?" asked Fownes, quickly, turning to the lawyer with a smile.

"Keep it a week and 't will shave you itself," retorted the joker, and this allusion to the steady depreciation of the colony paper money called forth another laugh.

"Then 't is not blunt?" responded Charles, but no one save the traveller at the small table caught the play on words, the Cockney cant term for money being unfamiliar to American ears. He smiled, and then studied the bond-servant with more interest than he had hitherto shown.

Meanwhile, at the first mention of razor, the Jew had left the room, and he now returned, carrying a great pack, which he placed upon the table.

"Sir," he said, in an accent which proved his appearance did not belie his race, while beginning to unstrap the bundle, "I haf von be-utiful razor, uf der besd —" but here his speech was interrupted by a roar of laughter.

"You 've a sharper to deal with now," laughed the joker, and another called, "Now ye 'll need no razor ter be shaved."

"Chentlemen, chentlemen," protested the peddler, "haf n't I always dealt fair mit you?" He fumbled in his half-opened pack, and shoving three razors out of sight, he produced a fourth, which he held out to the servant. "Dot iss only dree shillings, und it iss der besd of steel."

"You can trust Oppenheimer to know pretty much everything 'bout steals," sneered Bagby, who was clearly the local wit. "It's been his business for twenty years."

"I want a sharp razor, not a razor sharp," said Charles, good-naturedly, while taking the instrument and trying its edge with his finger.

"What business hez a bond-servant tew spend money fer a razor?" demanded the tavern-keeper, for nothing then so marked the distinction between the well-bred and the unbred as the smooth faces of the one and the hairy faces of the other.

"Has n't he a throat to cut?" demanded one of the group, "an' has n't a covenant man reason to cut it?"

"More likes he 's goin' a sparkin'," suggested one of the idlers. "The gal up ter the squire's holds herself pooty high an' mighty, but like as not she 's as plaguey fond of bundling with a good-looking man on the sly as most wenches."

"If she's set on that, I'm her man," remarked Bagby.

"Bundling?" questioned the covenant servant. "What's that?"

The question only produced a roar of laughter at his ignorance, during which the traveller turned to the publican and asked: —

"Who is this hind?"

"'T is a new bond-servant o' Squire Meredith's, who I hearn is no smouch on horses. Folks think he's a bloody-back who's took French leave."

"A deserter, heigh?" said the traveller, once more looking at the man, who was now exchanging with the peddler the three-shilling note for the razor. He waited till the trade had been consummated, and then suddenly said aloud, in a sharp, decisive way, "Attention! To the left — dress!"

Fownes' body suddenly stiffened itself, his hands dropped to his sides, and his head turned quickly to the left. For a second he held this position, then as suddenly relaxing himself, he turned and eyed the giver of the order.

"So ho! my man. It seems ye have carried Brown Bess," said the traveller, giving the slang term for the musket.

Flushed in face, Fownes wheeled on the man hotly, while the whole room waited his reply in silence. "Thou liest!" he asserted.

"Thou varlet!" cried the man so insulted, flushing in turn, as he sprang to his feet and caught up from the table a heavy riding-whip.

As he did so, the bond-servant's right hand went to his hip, as if instinctively seeking something there. The traveller's eyes followed the impulsive gesture, even while he, too, made a motion more instinctive than conscious, by stepping backward, as if to avoid something. This motion he checked, and said: —

"No. Bond-servants don't wear bayonets."

Again the colour sprang to Fownes' face, and his lips parted as if an angry retort were ready. But instead of uttering it, he turned and started to leave the room.

"Ay," cried the traveller, "run, while there's time, deserter."

Fownes faced about in the doorway, with a smile on his face not pleasant to see, it was at once so contemptuous and so lowering. Yet when he spoke there was an amused, almost merry note in his voice, as if he were enjoying something.

"Ar bain't no more deserter than thou baist spy," he retorted, as he left the tavern and went to where his horse was tethered. Unfastening him, he stood for a moment stroking the animal's nose.

"Joggles," he confided, "I fear, despite the praise the fair ones gave of my impersonation of 'The Fashionable Lover,' that I am not so good an actor as either Garrick or Barry. I forget, and I lose my temper. So, a bond-servant should cut his throat," he continued, as he swung lightly into the saddle. "I fear 't is the only way I can go undiscovered. Fool that I was to do it in a moment of passion. Five years of slavery!" Then he laughed. "But then I'd never have seen her! Egad, if she could be painted as she looked to-day by Reynolds or Gainsborough, 'twould set more than my blood glowing! There's a prize, Joggles! Beauty, wealth, and freedom, all in one. She'd be worth a tilt, too, if for nothing but the sport of it. We'll shave, make a dandy of ourselves, old man —" Then the servant paused — "and, like a fool, be recognised by some fellow like Clowes — what does he here? — but for my beard, and that he'd scarce expect to meet Charles —" Fownes checked himself, scowling. "Charles Nothing, a poor son of a gun of a bond-servant. Have done with such idiot schemes, man," he admonished. "For what did you run, if 't was not to bury yourself? And now you'd risk all for a petticoat." Taking from his pocket the razor, he threw it into the bushes that lined the road, saying as he did so, "Good-by, gentility."



VI

MEN ARE DECEIVERS EVER

THE departure of the bond-servant, leaving the sting of innuendo behind him, had turned all eyes toward the traveller, and Bagby but voiced the curiosity of the roomful when he inquired, "What did Fownes call you spy for?"

"Nay, man, he called me not that," denied the stranger, "unless he meant to call himself a deserter as well. Landlord, a bowl of swizzle for the company! Gentlemen, I am Lincolnshire born and bred. My name is John Evatt, and I am travelling through the country to find a likely settling place for six solid farmers, of whom I am one. Whom did you say was yon rogue's master?"

"Squire Meredith," informed mine host, now occupied in combining the rum, spruce beer, and sugar at the large table.

"And what sort of man is he?" asked Evatt, bringing his glass from the small table and taking his seat among the rest.

"He's as hot-tempered an' high an' mighty as King George hisself," cried one of the drinkers. "But I guess his stinkin' pride will come down a little afore the committee of Brunswick's through with him."

"Let thy teeth keep better guard over thy red rag, Zerubbabel," rebuked Joe Bagby, warningly. "We want no rattlepates to tell us — or others — what's needed or doing."

"This Meredith's a man of property, eh?" asked Evatt.

"He's been so since he married Patty Byllynge," replied the publican. "Afore then he war n't nothin' but a poor young lawyer over tew Trenton."

"And who was Patty Byllynge?"

"You don't know much 'bout West Jersey, or I guess you'd have heard of her," surmised Bagby. "'Tis n't every girl brings

her husband a pot of money and nigh thirty thousand acres of land. Folks tell that before the squire got her, the men was about her like — ” the speaker used a simile too coarse for repetition.

“So ho!” said the traveller. “Byllynge, heigh? Now I begin to understand. A daughter — or granddaughter — of one of the patentees?”

“Just so. In the old man’s day they held the lands all along this side of the Raritan, nigh up to Baskinridge, but they sold a lot in the forties.”

“Then perhaps this is the place to bargain about a bit? The land looked rich and warm as I rode along this afternoon.”

“T ain’t no use tryin’ ter buy of the new squire,” remarked one man. “He won’t do nothin’ but lease. He don’t want no freemen ’bout here.”

“Yer might buy o’ Squire Hennion. He sells now an’ agin,” suggested the innkeeper.

“Who’s he?” demanded Evatt.

“Another of the monopolisers who got a grant in the early days, before the land was good for anything,” explained Bagby. “His property is further down.”

“Ye’d better bargain quick, if ye want any,” spoke up an oldster. “Looks like squar’s son was a-coortin’ squar’s daughter, an’ mayhaps her money’ll make old Squar Hennion less put tew it fer cash.”

“So Squire Meredith is n’t popular?”

“He’ll find out suthin’ next time he offers fer Assembly,” asserted one of the group.

“He’s a member of Assembly, is he?” questioned Evatt.

“Then he’s all right on — he belongs to the popular party?”

“Not he!” cried several.

“He was agin the Association, tried tew prevent our sendin’ deputies tew Congress, an’ boasts that tea’s drunk at his table,” said the landlord.

“T won’t be for long,” growled Bagby.

“Then how comes it that ye elect him Assemblyman?”

“T is his tenants do it,” spoke up the lawyer. “They don’t have the pluck to vote against him for fear of their leaseholds. And so ’t is with the rest. The only way we can get our way is

by conventions and committees. But get it we will, let the gentry try as they please."

"Well, gentlemen," said Evatt, "here 's the swizzle. Glasses around, and I'll give ye a toast ye can all drink : May your freedom never be lessened by either Parliament or Congress !"

Two hours of drinking and talking followed, and when the last of the tipplers had staggered through the door, and Evatt, assisted by the publican, had reeled rather than walked upstairs to his room, if he was not fully informed as to the locality of which the tavern was the centre, it was because his brain was too fuddled by the mixed drink, and not because tongues had been guarded.

Eighteenth-century heads made light of drinking bouts, and Evatt ate a hearty breakfast the next morning. Thus fortified, he called for his horse, and announced his intention of seeing Squire Meredith "about that damned impertinent varlet."

Arrived at Greenwood, it was to find that the master of the house was away, having ridden to Bound Brook to see some of his more distant tenants ; but in colonial times visitors were such infrequent occurrences that he was made welcome by the hostess, and urged to stay to dinner. "Mr. Meredith will be back ere nightfall," she assured him, "and will deeply regret having missed thee if thou rides away."

"Madam," responded Evatt, "American hospitality is only exceeded by American beauty."

It was impossible not to like the stranger, for he was a capital talker, having much of the chat of London, tasty beyond all else to colonial palates, at his tongue's tip. With a succession of descriptions or anecdotes of the frequenters of the Park and Mall, of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, he entertained them at table, the two girls sitting almost open-mouthed in their eagerness and delight.

The meal concluded, the ladies regretfully withdrew, leaving Evatt to enjoy what he chose of a decanter of the squire's best Madeira, which had been served to him, visitors of education being rare treats indeed. Like all young peoples, Americans ducked very low to transatlantic travellers, and, truly colonial, could not help but think an Englishman of necessity a superior kind of being.

The guest filled his glass, unbuttoned the three lower buttons of his waistcoat, and slouched back in his chair. Then he put the wine to his lips, and holding the swallow in his mouth to prolong the enjoyment, a look of extreme contentment came over his visage. And if he had put his thoughts into words, he would have said:—

“By Heavens! What wine and what women! The one they smuggle, but where get they the other? In a rough new country who’d think to encounter greater beauty and delicacy than can be seen skirting the Serpentine? Such eyes, such a waist, and such a wrist! And those cheeks—how the colour comes and goes, telling everything that she would hide! And to think that some bumpkin will enjoy lips fit for a duke. Burn it! If ’t were not for my task, I’d have a try for Miss Innocence and—” The man glanced out of the window and let his eyes wander over the landscape, while he drained his glass—“Thirty thousand acres of land!” he said aloud, with a smack of pleasure.

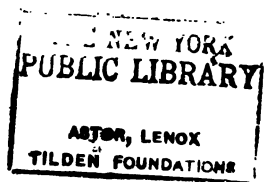
His eyes left off studying the fields to fix themselves on Janice, who passed the window, with the garden as an evident destination, and they followed her until she disappeared within the opening of the hedge. “There’s a foot and ankle,” he exclaimed with an expression on his face akin to that it had worn as he tasted the Madeira. “’T would fire enough sparks in London to set the Thames all aflame!” He reached for the Madeira once more, but after removing the stopper, he hesitated a moment, then replacing it, he rose, buttoned his waistcoat, and taking his hat from the hall, he slipped through the window and walked toward the garden.

Finding that Janice was not within the hedge-row, Evatt passed across the garden quickly and discovered the young lady standing outside the stable, engaged in the extremely undignified occupation of whistling. Her reason for the action was quickly revealed by the appearance of Clarion; and still unconscious that she was watched, after a word with the dog, they both started toward the river.

A few hasty strides brought the man up with the maiden, and as she slightly turned to see who had joined her, he said, “May I walk with you, Miss Meredith? I intended a stroll



“His eyes left off studying the fields to fix themselves on Janice.”



about the farm, and it will be all the pleasanter for so fair a guide."

Shyly but eagerly the girl assented, and richly rewarded was she in her own estimate by what the visitor had to tell. More gossip of court, of the lesser world of fashion, and of the theatre, he retailed: how the king walked and looked, of the rivalry between Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Baddeley, of Charles Fox's debts and eloquence, of the vogue of Cecilia Davis, or "L'Inglesina." To Janice, hungry with the true appetite of provincialism, it was all the most delicious of comfits. To talk to a man who could imitate the way the Duke of Gloucester limped at a levee when suffering from the gout, and who was able to introduce a story by saying, "As Lady Rochford once said to me at one of her routs—" was almost like meeting those distinguished beings themselves. Janice not merely failed to note that the man paid no heed whatever to the land they strolled over, but herself ceased to give time or direction the slightest thought.

"Oh!" she broke out finally, in her delight, "won't Tibbie be sorry when she knows what she's missed? And, forsooth, a proper pay out for her wrong-doing it is!"

"What mean ye by that?" questioned Evatt.

"She deserves to have it known, but though she called me tattle-tale, I'm no such thing," replied Janice, who in truth was still hot with indignation at Miss Drinker, and wellnigh bursting to confide her grievance against her whilom friend to this most delightful of men. "Doubtless, you observed that we are not on terms. That was why I came off without her."

Evatt, though not till this moment aware of the fact, nodded his head gravely.

"'T is all her doings, though she'd be glad enough to make it up if I would let her. A fine frenzy her ladyship would be in, too, if she dreamt he'd given me the miniature."

"A miniature!" marvelled the visitor, encouragingly. "Of whom?"

"'T is just what— Oh, I think I'll tell thee the whole tale and get thy advice. I dare not go to mommy, for I know she'd make me give it up, and dad-da being away, and Tibbie

in a snip-snap, I have no one to — and perhaps — I'd never tell thee to shame Tibbie, but because I need advice and — ”

“A man with half an eye would know you were no tale-bearer, Miss Janice,” her companion assured her.

Thus prompted and enticed, the girl poured out the whole story. “I wish I could show you the picture,” she ended. “She is the most beautiful creature I ever saw.”

“Hast never looked in a mirror, Miss Janice?”

“Now thou 't just teasing.”

“I' faith, 't is the last thought in my mind,” said Evatt, heartily.

“You really think me pretty?” questioned the girl, with evident delight if uncertainty.

Evatt studied the eager, guileless face questioningly turned to him, and had much ado to keep from smiling.

“'T is impossible not to think it,” he replied.

“Even after seeing the court beauties?” demanded Janice, half doubtful and half joyous.

“Not one but would have to give the *pas* to ye, Miss Janice,” protested Evatt, “could ye but be presented at St. James's.”

“How lovely!” cried Janice, ecstatically, and then in sudden abasement asserted, “Oh, I know you are — you are only making fun of me!”

“Now, burn me, if I am!” insisted the man, with such undoubted admiration in his manner as to confirm his words to the girl. “By Heaven!” he marvelled to himself. “Who'd have believed such innocence possible? 'T is Mother Eve before the fall! She knows nothing.” A view of woman likely to get Mr. Evatt into trouble. There is very little information concerning the ante-prandial Eve, but from later examples of her sex, it is safe to affirm that the mother of the race knew several things before partaking of the tree of knowledge. Man only is born so stupid as to need education.

“Why canst thou not let me have sight of this wondrous female?” he went on aloud. “Surely thou art not really fearsome to brave comparison.”

“'T is not that, indeed,” denied Janice, colouring, “but — well — in a moment.” The girl turned her back to Mr. Evatt, and in a moment faced him once more, the miniature in her hand. “Is n't she beautiful?”

Evatt looked at the miniature. "That she is," he assented. "And strike me dumb, but she reminds me of some woman I've once seen in London."

"Oh, how interesting!" exclaimed the girl. "What was her name?"

"'T is exactly that I am asking myself."

"He must be well-born," argued Janice, "to have her miniature; look at the jewels in her hair."

"Ah, my child, there's more than the well-born wear —" the man stopped short. "How know ye," he went on, "that the bondsman comes by it rightly? The frame is one of price."

"I don't," the girl replied, "and the initials on the back are n't his."

"'W. H. J. B.," read Evatt.

"He may have changed his name," suggested Janice.

"True," assented the man, with a slight laugh; "that's a mighty clever thought and gives us a clue to his real one."

"Perhaps you've heard of a man in London with a name to fit W. H. J. B.?" said the maid, inquiringly.

Evatt turned away to conceal an unsuppressable smile, while thinking, "The innocent imagines London but another Brunswick!"

"Dost think I should make him take it back?" asked Janice.

"Certainly not," replied her adviser, responding to the only too manifest wish of the girl.

"Then dost think I should speak to mommy or dadda?"

"'T is surely needless! The fellow refuses it, and so 't is yours till he demands it."

"How lovely! Oh, I'd like to be home this instant, to see how 't would appear about my neck. Last night I crept out of bed to have a look, but Tibbie turned over, and I thought me she was waking. I think I'll go at once and —"

"And end our walk?" broke in Evatt, reproachfully.

"'T is nearly tea-time," replied Janice, pointing to the sun. "How the afternoon has flown!"

"Thanks to my charming companion," responded the man, bowing low.

"Now you are teasing again," cried Janice. "I don't like to be made fun —"

“’Tis my last thought,” cried Evatt, with unquestionable earnestness, and possessing himself of Janice’s hand, he stooped and kissed it impetuously and hotly.

The colour flooded up into the maiden’s face and neck at the action, but still more embarrassing to her was the awkward pause which ensued, as they set out on their return. She could think of nothing to say, and the stranger would not help her. “Let her blush and falter and stammer,” was his thought. “Every minute of embarrassment is putting me deeper in her thoughts.”



VII

SPIDER AND FLY

FORTUNATELY for the girl, the distance to the house was not great, and the rapid pace she set in her stress quickly brought them to the doorway, which she entered with a sigh of relief. The guest was at once absorbed by her father, and Janice sought her room.

As she primped, the miniature lay before her, and occasionally she paused for a moment to look at it. Finally, when properly robed, she picked it up and held it for a moment. "I wonder if she broke his heart?" she soliloquised. "I don't see how he could help loving her; I know I should." Janice hesitated for a moment, and then tucked the miniature into her bosom. "If only Tibbie was n't—if—we could talk about it," she sighed, as she pinned on her little cap of lace above the hair dressed high *à la Pompadour*. "Why did she have to be—just as so many important things were to happen!" Miss Meredith looked at her double in the mirror, and sighed again. "Mr. Evatt must have been laughing at me," she said, "for she is so much prettier. But I should like to know why Charles always stares so at me."

In the meantime, Evatt, without so much as an allusion to the bond-servant, had presented a letter from a New Yorker, introducing him to the squire, and by the confidence thus established he proceeded to question Mr. Meredith long and carefully, not about farming lands and profits, but concerning the feeling of the country toward the questions then at issue between Great Britain and America. He made as they talked an occasional note, and the interview ended only with Peg's announcement of supper. Nor was this allowed to terminate the inquiry, for the squire, as Mrs. Meredith had foreseen, insisted on Evatt's spending the night, and Charles was accordingly ordered to ride

over to the inn for the traveller's saddlebags. After the ladies had left the two men at the table, the questioning was resumed over the spirits and pipes, and not till ten o'clock was passed did Evatt finally rise. Clearly he must have pleased the squire as well as he had the dames, for Mr. Meredith, with the hospitality of the time, pressed him heartily to stay for more than the morrow, assuring him of a welcome at Greenwood for as long as he would make it his abiding spot.

"Nothing, sir, would give me greater pleasure," responded Evatt, warmly, "but in confidence to ye, as a friend of government, I dare to say that my search for a farm is only the ostensible reason for my travels. I am executing an important and delicate mission for our government, and having already journeyed through the colonies to the northward, I must still travel through those of the south. 'T is therefore quite impossible for me to tarry more than the night. I should, in fact, not have dared to linger thus long were it not that your name was on the list given me by Lord Dartmouth of those to be trusted and consulted. And the information ye have furnished me concerning this region has proved that his Lordship did not err in his opinion as to your knowledge, disposition, and ability."

This sent the squire to his pillow with a delightful sense of his own importance, and led him to confide to the nightcap on the pillow beside him that "Mr. Evatt is a man of vast insight and discrimination." Regrettable as it is to record, the visitor, before seeking his own pillow, mixed some ink powder in a mug with a little water and proceeded to add to a letter already begun the following paragraph: —

"From thence I rode to Brunswick, a small Town on the Raritan. Here I find the same division of Sentiment I have already dwelt upon to your Lordship. The Gentry, consisting hereabouts of but two, are sharply opposed to the small Farmers and Labourers, and cannot even rely upon their own Tenantry for more than a nominal support. Neither of the great Proprietors seem to be Men of sound Judgment or natural Popularity, and Mr. Lambert Meredith—a name quite unknown to your Lordship, but of some consequence in this Colony through a fortunate Marriage with a descendant of one of the

original Patentees — at the last Election barely succeeded in carrying the Poll, and is represented to be a Man of much impracticability, hot-tempered, a stickler over trivial points, at odds with his Neighbours, and not even Master of his own Household. To such Men, my Lord, has fallen the Contest, on behalf of Government, while opposed to them are self-made Leaders, of Eloquence, of Force, and, most of all, of Dishonesty. Issues of Paper Money, escape from all Taxation, free Lands, suspensions of Debts — such and an hundred other tempting Promises they ply the People with, while the Gentry sit helpless, save those who, seeing how the Tide sets, throw Principles to the Wind, and plunge in with the popular Leaders. Believe me, my Lord, as I have urged already, a radical change of Government, and a plentiful sprinkling of Regiments, will alone prevent the Disorders from rising to a height that threatens Anarchy."

Though the visitor was the last of the household abed, he was early astir the next morning, and while Charles was beginning his labours of the day, by leading each horse to the trough in the barnyard, Evatt joined him.

"We made a bad start at our first meeting, my man," he said in a friendly manner, "and I have only myself to blame for 't. One should keep his own secrets."

"'T is a sorry calling yours would be if many kept to that," replied Fownes, with a suggestion of contempt.

Evatt bit his lip, and then forced a smile. "The old saying runs that three could keep a secret if two were but dead."

Charles smiled. "My two will never trouble me," he said meaningly, "so save your time and breath."

"Hadst best not be so sure," retorted Evatt, in evident irritation. "'Twixt thine army service, the ship that fetched thee on, and that miniature, I have more clues than have served to ferret many a secret."

"And entirely lack the important one. Till you have that, I don't fear you. What is more, I'll tell you what 't is."

"What?" asked the man.

"A reward," sneered Fownes.

"I see I've a sly tyke to deal with," said the man. "But

if ye choose not —” The speaker checked himself as Janice came through the opening in the hedge, and the two stood silently watching her as she approached.

“Charles,” she said, when within speaking distance, while holding out the miniature, “I’ve decided you must take this.”

Charles smiled pleasantly. “Then ’t is your duty to make me, Miss Meredith,” he replied, folding his arms.

“Won’t you please take it?” begged Janice, not a little nonplussed by her position, and that Evatt should be a witness of it. “We know it belongs to you, and ’t is too valuable for me to —”

“How know you that?” questioned the man, still smiling pleasantly.

“Because ’t was with your clothes when you went in swimming,” said Janice, frankly.

“Miss Meredith,” replied Charles, “the word of a poor devil of a bond-servant can have little value, but I swear to you that that never belonged to me, and that I therefore have no right to it. If it gives you any pleasure, keep it.”

“That is as good as saying ye stole it,” asserted Evatt.

Charles smiled contemptuously. “‘All are not thieves whom dogs bark at,’” he retorted. “Nor are all of us sneaks and spies,” he added, as, turning, he led away the horse toward the stable.

“Yon fellow does n’t stickle at calling ye names, Miss Meredith,” said Evatt.

“He has no right to call me a spy,” cried the girl, indignantly.

“His words deserve no more heed than what he said t’other night at the tavern of ye.”

“What said he at the tavern?” demanded Janice.

“’T is best left unspoken.”

“I want to know what he said of me,” insisted Miss Meredith.

“’T would only shame ye.”

“He — he told of — he did n’t tell them I took the miniature?” faltered Janice.

Again Evatt bit his lip, but this time to keep from smiling. “Worse than that, my child,” he replied.

“Why should he insult me?” protested Janice, proudly, but still colouring at the possibility.

"Ye do right to suppose it unlikely. Yet 't is so, and while I can hardly hope that my word will be taken for it, his lies to us a moment since prove that he is capable of any untruth."

Evatt spoke with such honesty of manner, and with such an apparent lack of motive for inventing a tale, that Janice became doubtful. "He could n't insult me," she said, "for I — I have n't done anything."

"'T is certain that he did. Had I but known ye at the time, Miss Janice, he should have been made to swallow his coarse insult. 'T was for that I sought him this morning. Had ye not interrupted us, 't would have fared badly for him."

"You were very kind," said Janice, dolefully, beginning, more from his manner than his words, to believe Evatt. "I did n't know there were such bad men in the world. And for him to say it at the tavern, where 't will be all over the county in no time! Was it very bad?"

"No one would believe a redemptioner," replied Evatt. "Yet had I the right —"

"Marse Meredith send me to tell youse come to breakfast," interrupted Peg from the gateway in the box.

"Why!" exclaimed the girl. "It can't be seven."

"The squire ordered it early, that I might be in the saddle betimes," explained Evatt, and then as the girl started toward the house, he checked the movement by taking her hand. "Miss Janice," he said, "in a half-hour I shall ride away — not because 't is my wish, but because I 'm engaged in an important and perilous mission — a mission — can ye keep a secret — even from — from your father and mother?"

Janice was too young and inexperienced to know that a secret is of all things the most to be avoided, and though her little hand, in her woman's intuition that all was not right, tried feebly to free itself, she none the less answered eagerly if half-doubtfully, "Yes."

"I am sent here under an assumed name — by His Majesty. Ye — I was indiscreet enough with ye, to tell — to show that I was other than what I pretend to be, but I felt then and now that I could trust ye. Ye will keep secret all I say?"

Again Janice, with her eyes on the ground, said, "Yes."

"I must do the king's work, and when 't is done I return to

England and resume my true position, and ye will never again hear of me — unless — ” The man paused, with his eyes fixed on the downcast face of the girl.

“Unless?” asked Janice, when the silence became more embarrassing than to speak.

“Unless ye — unless ye give me the hope that by first returning here — as your father has asked me to do — that I may — may perhaps carry ye away with me. Ah, Miss Janice, ’t is an outrage to keep such beauty hidden in the wilds of America, when it might be the glory of the court and the toast of the town.”

Again a silence ensued, fairly agonising to the bewildered and embarrassed girl, which lengthened, it seemed to her, into hours, as she vainly sought for some words that she might speak.

“Please let go my hand,” she begged finally.

“Not till you give me a yea or nay.”

“But I can’t — I don’t — ” began Janice, and then as footsteps were heard, she cried, “Oh, let me go! Here comes Charles.”

“May I come back?” demanded Evatt.

“Yes,” assented the girl, desperately.

“And ye promise to be secret?”

“I promise,” cried Janice, and to her relief recovered her hand, just as Charles entered the garden.

Like many another of her sex, however, she found that to gain physical and temporary freedom she had only enslaved herself the more, for after breakfast Evatt availed himself of a moment’s interest of Mrs. Meredith’s in the ordering down of his saddle-bags, and of the squire’s in the horse, to say to Janice, aside : —

“I gave ye back your hand, Janice, but remember ’t is mine,” and before the girl could frame a denial, he was beside Mr. Meredith at the stirrup, and, ere many minutes, had ridden away, leaving behind him a very much flattered, puzzled, and miserable demoiselle.



VIII

SEVERAL BURNING QUESTIONS

THE twenty-four hours of Evatt's visit troubled Janice in recollection for many a day, and marked the beginning of the most distinct change that had come to her. The experience was in fact that which befalls every one somewhere between the ages of twelve and thirty, by which youth first learns to recognise that life is not mere living, but is rather the working out of a strange problem compounded of volition and necessity, accident and fatality. The pledge of secrecy preyed upon her, the stranger's assumption that she had bound herself distressed her, and the thought that she had been the subject of tavern talk made her furious. Yet she had promised concealment, she was powerless to write to Evatt denying his pretension, and she could not counteract a slander the purport of which was unknown to her. Had she and Tibbie but been on terms, she might have gained some relief by confiding her woes to her, but that young lady's visit came to an end so promptly after the departure of Evatt that restoration of good feeling was only obtained in the parting kiss. For the first time in her life, Janice's head would keep on thinking after it was resting on its pillow, and many a time that enviable repository was called upon to dry her tears and cool her burning cheeks. Never, it seemed to her, had man or woman borne so great a burden of trouble.

The change in the girl was too great not to be noticed by the household of Greenwood. Mrs. Meredith joyfully confided to the Rev. Mr. McClave that she thought an "effectual calling" had come to her daughter, and that Janice was in a most promising condition of unhappiness. Thus encouraged, the divine, who was a widower of forty-two, with five children sadly needing a woman's care, only too gladly made morning

calls on the daughter of his wealthiest parishioner, and in place of the discussions with Tibbie over romance in general, and the bond-servant in particular, as they sewed or knitted, Janice was forced to attend to long monologues specially prepared for her benefit, on what to the presbyter were the truly burning questions of justification, adoption, and sanctification. What is more, she not only listened dutifully, but once or twice was even moved to tears, to the enormous encouragement of Mr. McClave. The squire, who highly resented the lost vivacity and the new seriousness, insisted that the "girl sha'n't be made into a long-faced, psalm-singing hypocrite ;" but not daring to oppose what his wife approved, he merely expressed his irritation to Janice herself, teasing and fretting her scarcely less than did Mr. McClave.

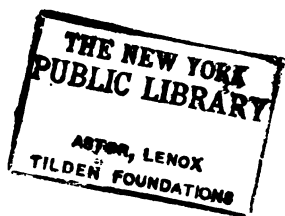
Not the least of her difficulties was her bearing toward the bondsman. Conditions were still so primitive that the relations between master and servant were yet on a basis that made the distinctions between them ones of convenience rather than convention, and thus Janice was forced to mark out a new line of conduct. At first she adopted that of avoidance and proud disregard of him, but his manner toward her continued to convey such deference that the girl found her attitude hard to maintain, and presently began to doubt if he could be guilty of the imputation. Nor could she be wholly blind to the fact that the groom had come to take a marked interest in her. She noted that he made occasion for frequent interviews, and that he dropped all pretence of speaking to her in his affected Somerset dialect. When now she ventured out of doors, she was almost certain to encounter him, and rarely escaped without his speaking to her ; while he often came into the kitchen on frivolous pretexts when she was working there, and seemed in no particular haste to depart.

Several times he was detected by Mrs. Meredith thus idling within doors, and was sharply reproved for it. Neither to this, nor to the squire's orders that he should put an end to his "night-walking" and to his trips to the village, did he pay the slightest heed.

Fownes entered the kitchen one morning in November while Janice and Sukey were deep in the making of some



“The divine made morning calls on Janice.”



grape jelly, carrying an armful of wood ; for the bond-servant for once had willingly assumed a task that had hitherto been Tom's. Putting the logs down in the wood-box, he stood with back to the fire, studying Miss Meredith, as, well covered with a big apron, with rolled up sleeves, flyaway locks, and flushed cheeks, she pounded away in a mortar, reducing loaf sugar to usable shape.

"Now youse clar right out of yar," said Sukey, who, though the one servant who was fond of Charles, like all good cooks, was subject to much ferment of mind when preserving was to the fore. "We uns doan want no men folks clutterin' de fire."

"Ah, Sukey," besought Charles, appealingly, "there's a white frost this morning, and 't is bitter outside. Let me just warm my fingers?"

Sukey promptly relented, but the chill in Fownes' fingers was clearly not unendurable, for in a moment he came to the table, and putting his hand over that of Janice, which held the pestle, he said : —

"Let me do the crushing. 'T is too hard work for you."

"I wish you would," Miss Meredith somewhat breathlessly replied. "My arms are almost ready to drop off."

"'T would set the quidnuncs discussing to which of the Greek goddesses they belonged," remarked Fownes. Then he was sorry he had said it, for Miss Meredith promptly unrolled her sleeves ; not because in her secret heart she did not like the speech, but because of a consciousness that Charles was noticing what the Greek goddesses generally lack. A low-cut frock was almost the unvarying dress of the ladies, there was nothing wrong in the display of an ankle, and elbow sleeves were very much the vogue, but to bare the arms any higher was an immodesty not permitted to those who were then commonly termed the "bon ton."

This addition to the working staff promptly produced an order from Sukey for Janice to assume the duty of stirring a pot just placed over the fire, "while I 'se goes down cellar an' clars a shelf for them jellies to set on. Keep a stirrin', honey, so 's it won't burn," was her parting injunction.

No sooner was the cook out of hearing than Charles spoke : "For two days," he said in a low voice, "I have tried to get

word with you. Won't you come to the stable when I am there?"

"Are you going to crush that sugar?" asked Miss Meredith.

"Art going to come to the stable?" calmly questioned Charles.

"Give me the pestle!" said Janice, severely.

"Because if you won't," continued the groom, "I shall have to say what I want now."

"I prefer not to hear it," Janice announced, moving from the fire.

"You must keep on stirring, or 't will burn, Miss Janice," the man reminded her, taking a mean advantage of the situation.

Janice came back and resumed her task, but she said, "I don't choose to listen."

"'T is for thy father's sake I ask it."

"How?" demanded the girl, looking up with sudden interest.

"I went to the village t' other night," replied the man, "to drill —" Then he checked himself, in evident disconcertion.

"Drill?" asked Janice. "What drill?"

"Let us call it quadrille, since that is not the material part," said Charles. "What is to the point is that after — after doing what took me, I stayed to help in Guy Fawkes' fun on the green."

"Well?" questioned the girl, encouragingly.

"The frolickers had some empty tar barrels and an effigy of the Pope, and they gave him and a copy of the Boston Port Bill each a coat of tar and leaves, and then burned them."

"What fun!" cried Janice, ceasing to stir in her interest.

"I wish mommy would let me go. She says 't is unbecoming in the gentility, but I don't see why being well born should be a reason for not having as good a time as —"

"As servants?" interrupted Fownes, hotly, as if her words stung him.

"I'm afraid, Charles," reproved Janice, assuming again a severe manner, "that you have a very bad temper."

Perhaps the man might have retorted, but instead he let

the anger die from his face, as he fixed his eyes on the floor. "I have, Miss Janice," he acknowledged sadly, after a moment's pause, "and 't is the curse of my life."

"You should discipline it," advised Miss Meredith, sagely. "When I lose my temper, I always read a chapter in the Bible," she added, with a decidedly "holier than thou" in her manner.

"How many times hast thou read the good book through, Miss Janice?" asked Fownes, smiling, and Miss Meredith's virtuous pose became suddenly an uncomfortable one to the young lady.

"You were to tell me something about Mr. Meredith," she said stiffly.

"After burning the Pope and the bill, 't was suggested by some to empty the pot of tar on the fire. But objection was made, because —"

"Because?" questioned Janice.

"Someone said 't would be needed shortly to properly season *green wood*, and therefore must not be wasted."

"You don't think they —?" cried Janice, in alarm.

The servant nodded his head. "The feeling against the squire is far deeper than you suspect. 'T will find vent in some violence, I fear, unless he yield to public sentiment."

"He'll never truckle to the country licks and clouted shoons of Brunswick," asserted Janice, proudly.

"'T will fare the worse for him. 'T is as sensible to run counter to public opinion as 'tis to cut roads over mountains."

"'T is worse still to be a coward," cried Janice, contemptuously. "I fear, Charles, you are very mean-spirited."

Fownes shrugged his shoulders. "As a servant should be," he muttered bitterly.

"Even a servant can do what is right," answered the girl.

"'T is not a question of right, 't is one of expediency," replied the bondsman. "A year at court, Miss Janice, would teach you that in this world 't is of monstrous importance to know when to bow."

"What do you know of court?" exclaimed Janice.

"Very little," confessed the man. "But I know it teaches

one good lesson in life, — that of submission, — and an important thing 't is to learn."

"I only bow to those whom I know to be my superiors," said Janice, with her head held very erect.

"'T is an easy way for you to avoid bowing," asserted the groom, smiling.

Again Janice sought a change of subject by saying, "Think you that is why we are being spied upon?"

"Spied?" questioned the bondsman.

"Last week dadda thought he saw a face one evening at the parlour window, and two nights ago I looked up suddenly and saw — Well, mommy said 't was only vapours, but I know I saw something."

The servant turned his face away from Janice, and coughed. Then he replied, "Perhaps 't was some one watching you. Didst make no attempt to find him?"

"Dadda went to the window both times, but could see nothing."

"He probably had time to hide behind the shrubs," surmised Charles. "I shall set myself to watching, and I'll warrant to catch the villain at it if he tries it again." From the savageness with which he spoke, one would have inferred that he was bitterly enraged at any one spying through the parlour window on Miss Meredith's evening hours.

"I wish you would," solicited Janice. "For if it happened again, I don't know what I should do. Mommy insisted it was n't a ghost, and scolded me for screaming; but all the same, it gave me a dreadful turn. I did n't go to sleep for hours."

"I am sorry it frightened you," said the servant, and then after a moment's hesitation he continued, "'T was I, and if I had thought for a moment to scare you —"

"You!" cried Janice. "What were you doing there?"

The man looked her in the eyes while he replied in a low voice, "Looking at paradise, Miss Janice."

"Janice Meredith," said her mother's voice, sternly, "thou good-for-nothing! Thou 'st let the syrup burn, and the smell is all over the house. Charles, what dost thou mean by loafing indoors at this hour of the day? Go about thy work."

And paradise dissolved into a pot of burnt syrup.



IX

PARADISE AND ELSEWHERE

WHILE Charles was within hearing, Mrs. Meredith continued to scold Janice about the burnt syrup, but this subject was ended with his exit.

"I'm ashamed that a daughter of mine should allow a servant to be so familiar," Mrs. Meredith began anew. "'T is a shame on us all, Janice. Hast thou no idea of what is decent and befitting to a girl of thy station?"

"He was n't familiar," cried Janice, angrily and proudly, "and you should know that if he had been I — he was telling me —"

"Yes," cried her mother, "tell me what he was saying about paradise? Dost think me a nizey, child, not to know what men mean when they talk about paradise?"

Janice's cheeks reddened, and she replied hotly, "If men talked to you about paradise, why should n't they talk to me? I'm sure 't is a pleasant change after the parson's everlasting and eternal talk of an everlasting and eternal —"

"Don't thee dare say it!" interrupted Mrs. Meredith. "Thou fallen, sin-eaten child! Go to thy room and stay there for the rest of the day. 'T is all of a piece that thou shouldst disgrace us by unseemly conduct with a stable-boy. Fine talk 't will make for the tavern."

The injustice and yet possible truth in this speech was too much for Janice to hear, and without an attempt at reply, she burst into a storm of tears and fled to her room.

Deprived of a listener, Mrs. Meredith sought the squire, and very much astonished him by a prediction that, "Thy daughter, Mr. Meredith, is going to bring disgrace on the family."

"What's to do now?" cried the parent.

"A pretty to do, indeed," his wife assured him. "Dost want her running off some fine night with thy groom?"

"Tush, Matilda!" responded Mr. Meredith. "'Tis impossible."

"Just what my parents said when thou camest a-courting."

"I was no redemptioner."

"'T was none the less a step-down for me," replied Mrs. Meredith, calmly. "And I had far less levity than —"

"Nay, Matilda, she often reminds me very —"

"Lambert, I never was light! Or at least never after I sat under Dr. Edwards and had a call. The quicker we marry Janice to Mr. McClave, the better 't will be for her."

"Now, pox me!" cried the squire, "if I'll give my lass to be made the drudge of another woman's children."

"'T is the very discipline she needs," retorted the wife. "But for my checking her a moment ago I believe she'd have spoken disrespectfully of hell!"

"Small wonder!" muttered her husband. "Is't not enough to ye Presbyterians to doom one to everlasting torment in the future life without making this life as bad?"

"'T is the way to be saved," replied Mrs. Meredith. "As Mr. McClave said to Janice shortly since, 'Be assured that doing the unpleasant thing is the surest road to salvation, for tho' it should not find grace in the eyes of a righteously angry God, yet having been done from no carnal and sinful craving of the flesh, it cannot increase his anger towards you.' Ah, Lambert, that man has the true gift."

"Since he's so damned set on being uncarnal," snapped the squire, "let him go without Janice."

"And have her running off with an indentured servant, as Anne Loughton did?"

"She'll do nothing of the kind. If ye want a husband for the lass, let her take Phil."

"A bankrupt."

"Tush! There are acres enough to pay the old squire's debts three times over. She'd bring Phil enough ready money to clear it all, and 'tis rich mellow land that will double in value, give it time."

"I tell thee her head 's full of this bond-servant. The two were in the kitchen just now, talking about paradise, and I know not what other foolishness."

"That," said Mr. Meredith, with a grin of enjoyment, "sounds like true Presbyterian doctrine. The Westminster Assembly seem to have left paradise out of the creation."

"Such flippancy is shameful in one of thy years, Mr. Meredith," said his wife, sternly, "and canst have but one ending."

"That is all any of us can have, Patty," replied the squire, genially.

Mrs. Meredith went to the door, but before leaving the room, she said, still with a stern, set face, though with a break in her voice, "Is't not enough that my four babies are enduring everlasting torment, but my husband and daughter must go the same way?"

"There, there, Matilda!" cried the husband. "'T was said in jest only and was nothing more than lip music. Come back—" the speech ended there as a door at a distance banged. "Now she 'll have a cry all by herself," groaned the squire. "'T is a strange thing she took it so bravely when the road was rough, yet now, when 't is easy pulling, she lets it fret and gall her."

Then Mr. Meredith looked into his fire, and saw another young girl, a little more serious than Janice, perhaps, but still gay-hearted and loved by many. He saw her making a stolen match with himself; passed in review the long years of alienation from her family, the struggle with poverty, and, saddest of all, the row of little gravestones which told of the burial of the best of her youth. He saw the day finally when, a worn, saddened woman, she at last was in the possession of wealth, to find in it no pleasure, yet to turn eagerly, and apparently with comfort, to the teachings of that strange combination of fire and logic, Jonathan Edwards. He recalled the two sermons during Edwards's brief term as president of Nassau Hall, which moved him so little, yet which had convinced Mrs. Meredith that her dead babies had been doomed to eternal punishment and had made her the stern, unyielding woman she was. The squire was too hearty an animal, and lived too much in the

open air, to be given to introspective thought, but he shook his head. "A strange warp and woof we weave of the skein," he sighed, "that sorrow for the dead should harden us to the living." Mr. Meredith rose, went upstairs, and rapped at a door. Getting no reply, after a repetition of the knock, he went in.

A glance revealed what at first sight looked like a crumpled heap of clothes upon the bed, but after more careful scrutiny the mass was found to have a head, very much buried between two pillows, and the due quantity of arms and legs. Walking to the bed, the squire put his hand on the bundle.

"There, lass," he said, "'t is nought to make such a pothor about."

"Oh, dadda," moaned Janice, "I am the most unhappy girl that ever lived."

It is needless to say after this remark that Miss Meredith's knowledge of the world was not of the largest, and the squire, with no very great range of experience, smiled a little as he said: —

"Then 'twill not make you more miserable to wed the parson?"

"Dadda!" exclaimed the girl, rolling over quickly, to get a sight of his countenance. When she found him smiling, the anxious look on the still red and tear-stained face melted away, and she laughed merrily. "Think of the life I'd give the good man! How I would wherrit him! He'd have to give up his church to have time enough to preach to me." Apparently the deep woe alluded to the moment before was forgotten.

"I've no manner of doubt he'd enjoy the task," declared the father, with evident pride. "Ah, Jan, many a man would enter the ministry, if he might be ordained parson of ye."

"The only parson I want is a father confessor," said Janice, sitting up and giving him a kiss.

"Then what's this maggot your mother has got in her head about ye and Charles and paradise?" laughed her father.

"Indeed, dadda," protested the girl, eagerly, "mommy was most unjust. I was to stir some syrup, and Charles came into

the kitchen and would talk to me, and as I could n't leave the pot, I had to listen, and then — well — ”

“I thought as much!” cried the squire, heartily, when Janice paused. “Where the syrup is, there'll find ye the flies. But we'll have no horse-fly buzzing about ye. My fine gentleman shall be taught where he belongs, if it takes the whip to do it.”

“No, dadda,” exclaimed Janice. “He spoke but to warn me of danger to you. He says there's preparation to tar and feather you unless you — you do something.”

“Foo!” sniffed the squire. “Let them snarl. I'll show them I'm not a man to be driven by tag, long tail, and bobby.”

“But Charles — ” began the girl.

“Ay, Charles,” interrupted Mr. Meredith. “I've no doubt he's one of 'em. 'Tis always the latest importations take the hottest part against the gentry.”

“Nay, dadda, I think he — ”

“Mark me, that's what takes the tyke to the village so often.”

“He said 't was to drill he went.”

“To drill?” questioned the squire. “What meant he by that?”

“I asked him, and he said 't was quadrille. Dost think he meant dancing or cards?”

“'Tis in keeping that he should be a dancing master or a card-sharper,” asserted Mr. Meredith. “No wonder 't is a disordered land when 't is used as a catchall for every man not wanted in England. We'll soon put a finish to his night-walking.”

“I don't think he's a villain, dadda, and he certainly meant kindly in warning us.”

“To make favour by tale-bearing, no doubt.”

“I'm sure he'd not a thought of it,” declared Janice, with an unconscious eagerness which made the squire knit his brows.

“Ye speak warmly, child,” he said. “I trust your mother be not justified in her suspicion.”

The girl, who meanwhile had sprung off the bed, drew her-

self up proudly. "Mommy is altogether wrong," she replied. "I'd never descend so low."

"I said as much," responded the squire, gleefully.

"A likely idea, indeed!" exclaimed Janice. "As if I'd have aught to do with a groom! No, I never could shame the family by that."

"Wilt give me your word to that, Jan?" asked the squire.

"Yes," cried the girl, and then roguishly added, "Why, dadda, I'd as soon, yes, sooner, marry old Belza, who at least is a prince in his own country, than see a Byllynge marry a bond-servant."



X

A COLONIAL CHRISTMAS

FOR some weeks following the pledge of Janice, the life at Greenwood became as healthily monotonous as of yore. Both Mr. and Mrs. Meredith spoke so sharply to both Sukey and Charles of his loitering about the kitchen that his visits, save at meal times, entirely ceased. The squire went further and ordered him to put an end to his trips to the village, but the man took this command in sullen silence, and was often absent.

One circumstance, however, very materially lessened the possible encounters between the bond-servant and the maiden. This was no less than the setting in of the winter snows, which put a termination to all the girl's outdoor life, excepting the attendance at the double church services on Sundays, which Mrs. Meredith never permitted to be neglected. From the window Janice sometimes saw the groom playing in the drifts with Clarion, but that was almost the extent of her knowledge of his doings. It is to be confessed that she eagerly longed to join them or, at least, to have a like sport with the dog. Eighteenth-century etiquette, however, neither countenanced such conduct in the quality, nor, in fact, clothed them for it.

A point worth noting at this time was connected with one window of the parlour. Each afternoon as night shut down, it was Peg's duty to close all the blinds, for colonial windows not being of the tightest, every additional barricade to Boreas was welcome, and this the servant did with exemplary care. But every evening after tea, Janice always walked to a particular window and, opening the shutter, looked out for a moment, as if to see what the night promised, before she took her seat at her tambour frame or sewing. Sometimes one of her parents called attention to the fact that she had not quite closed the

shutters again, and she always remedied the oversight at once. Otherwise she never looked at the window during the whole evening, glance where she might. Presumably she still remembered the fright her putative ghost had occasioned her, and chose not to run the chance of another sight of him. Almost invariably, however, in the morning she blew on the frost upon the window of her own room and having rubbed clear a spot, looked below, much as if she suspected ghosts could leave tracks in the snow. In her behalf it is only fair to say that the girls of that generation were so shut in as far as regarded society or knowledge of men that they let their imaginations question and wander in a manner difficult now to conceive. At certain ages the two sexes are very much interested in each other, and if this interest is not satisfied objectively, it will be subjectively.

Snow, if a jailer, was likewise a defence, and apparently cooled for a time the heat of the little community against the squire. Even the Rev. Mr. McClave's flame of love and love of flame were modified by the depth of the drifts he must struggle through, in order to discourse on eternal torment while gazing at earthly paradise. Janice became convinced that the powers of darkness no longer had singled her out as their particular prey, and in the peaceful isolation of the winter her woes, when she thought of them, underwent a change of grammatical tense which suggested that they had become things of the past.

One of her tormenting factors was not to be so treated. Philemon alone made nothing of the change of season, riding the nine miles between his home and Greenwood by daylight or by moonlight, as if his feeling for the girl not merely warmed but lighted the devious path between the drifts. Yet it was not to make love he came; for he sat a silent, awkward figure when once within doors, speaking readily enough in response to the elders, but practically inarticulate whenever called upon to reply to Janice. Her bland unconsciousness was a barrier far worse than the snow; and never dreaming that he was momentarily declaring his love for her in a manner far stronger than words, he believed her wholly ignorant of what he felt, and stayed for hours at a time, longing

helplessly for a turn of events which should make it possible for him to speak.

Philemon was thus engaged or disengaged one December morning when Peg entered the parlour where the family were sitting as close to the fire as the intense glow of the hickory embers would allow, and handing Janice a letter with an air of some importance, remarked, "Charles he ask me give you dat." Then, colonial servants being prone to familiarity, and negro slaves doubly so, Peg rested her weight on one foot, and waited to learn what this unusual event might portend. All present instantly fixed their eyes upon Janice, but had they not done so it is probable that she would have coloured much as she did, for the girl was enough interested and enough frightened to be quite unconscious of the eyes upon her.

"A letter for thee, lass!" exclaimed the squire. "Let's have the bowels of it."

The necessity for that very thing was what made the occurrence so alarming to Janice, for her woman's intuition had at once suggested, the moment she had seen the bold handwriting of the superscription, that it could be from none other than Evatt, and she had as quickly surmised that her father and mother would insist upon sight of the missive. Unaware of what it might contain, she sat with red cheeks, not daring to break the seal.

"Hast got the jingle brains, child?" asked her mother, sharply, "that thou dost nothing but stare at it?"

Janice laid the letter in her lap, saying, "'Twill wait till I finish this row." It was certainly a hard fate which forced her to delay the opening of the first letter she had ever received.

"'Twill nothing of the sort," said her mother, reaching out for the paper. "Art minded to read it on the sly, miss? There shall be no letters read by stealth. Give it me."

"Oh, mommy," begged the girl, desperately, "I'll show it to you, but—oh—let me read it first, oh, please!"

"I think 't is best not," replied her mother. "Thy anxiety has an ill look to it, Janice."

The girl handed the letter dutifully, and with an anxious attention watched her mother break it open, all pleasure in

the novelty of the occurrence quite overtopped by dread of what was to come.

"What nonsense is this?" was Mrs. Meredith's anything but encouraging exclamation. Then she read out:—

"'Tis unworthy of you, and of your acceptance, but 't is the fairest gift I could think of, and the best that I could do. If you will but put it in the frame you have, it may seem more befitting a token of the feelings that inspired it."

Janice, unable to restrain her curiosity, rose and peered over her mother's shoulder. From that vantage point she ejaculated, "Oh, how beautiful she is!"

What she looked at was an unset miniature of a young girl, with a wealth of darkest brown hair, powdered to a gray, and a little straight nose with just a suggestion of a tilt to it, giving the mignon face an expression of pride that the rest of the countenance by no means aided. For the remaining features, the mouth was still that of a child, the short upper lip projecting markedly over the nether one, producing not so much a pouty look as one of innocence; the eyes were brilliant black, or at least were shadowed to look it by the long lashes, and the black eyebrows were slender and delicately arched upon a low forehead.

"Art a nizey, Janice," cried her mother, "not to know thine own face?"

"Mommy!" exclaimed the girl. "Is—am I as pretty as that?"

"'T is vastly flattered," said her mother, quickly. "I should scarce know it."

"Nay, Matilda," dissented the squire, who was now also gazing at the miniature. "'T is a good phiz of our lass, and but does her justice. Who ever sent it ye, Jan?"

"I suppose 't was Mr. Evatt," confessed Janice.

"Let's have sight of the wrapper," said the father. "Nay, Jan. This has been in no post-rider's bag or 't would bear the marks."

"Peg, tell Charles to come here," ordered Mrs. Meredith, and after a five minutes spent by the group in various surmises, the bond-servant, followed by the still attentive Peg, entered the room.

"Didst find this letter at the tavern?" demanded the squire. The groom looked at the wrapper held out to him, and replied, "Mayhaps."

"And what took ye there against my orders?"

Charles shrugged his shoulders, and then smiled. "Ask Hennion," he said.

"What means he, Phil?" questioned the squire.

"Now you've been an' told the whole thing," exclaimed Philemon, looking very much alarmed.

"Not I," replied the servant. "'Tis for you to tell it, man, if 'tis to be told."

"Have done with such mingle-mangle talk," ordered Mr. Meredith, fretfully. "Is't not enough to have French gibberish in the world, without —"

"Charles," interrupted Mrs. Meredith, "who gave thee this letter?"

"Ask Miss Meredith," Fownes responded, again smiling.

"It must be Mr. Evatt," said Janice. Then as the bond-servant turned sharply and looked at her, she became conscious that she was colouring. "I wish there was no such thing as a blush," she moaned to herself, — a wish in which no one seeing Miss Meredith would have joined.

"'T was not from Mr. Evatt," denied the servant.

Without time for thought, Janice blurted out, "'Then 'tis from you?" and the groom nodded his head.

"What nonsense is this?" cried Mr. Meredith. "Dost mean to say 'tis from ye? Whence came the picture?"

"I was the limner," replied Charles.

"What clanker have we here?" exclaimed the squire.

"'Tis no lie, Mr. Meredith," answered the servant. "In England I've drawn many a face, and 'twas even said in jest that I might be a poor devil of an artist if ever I quitted the ser — quitted service."

"And where got ye the colours?"

"When I went to Princeton with the shoats I found Mr. Peale painting Dr. Witherspoon, and he gave me the paints and the ivory."

"Ye'll say I suppose too that ye wrote this," demanded the squire, indicating the letter.

"I'll not deny it."

"Though ye could not sign the covenant?"

Fownes once more shrugged his shoulders. "'T is a fool would sign a bond," he asserted.

"Better a fool than a knave," retorted Mr. Meredith, angered by Charles' manner. "Janice, give the rogue back the letter and picture. No daughter of Lambert Meredith accepts gifts from her father's bond-servants."

The man flushed, while evidently struggling to control his temper, and Janice, both in pity for him, as well as in desire for possession of the picture, for gifts were rare indeed in those days, begged:—

"Oh, dadda, mayn't I keep it?"

"Mr. Meredith," said Charles, speaking with evident repression, "the present was given only with the respect—" he hesitated as if for words and then continued—"the respect a slave might owe his—his better. Surely on this day it should be accepted in the same spirit."

"What day mean ye?" asked Mr. Meredith.

The servant glanced at each face with surprise on his own. When he read a question in all, he asked in turn, "Hast forgotten 't is Christmas?"

Mrs. Meredith, who was still holding the portrait, dropped it on the floor, as if it were in some manner dangerous. "Christmas!" she cried. "Janice, don't thee dare touch the—"

"Oh, mommy, please," beseeched the girl.

"Take it away, Charles," ordered Mrs. Meredith. "And never let me hear of thy being the devil's deputy again. We'll have no papish mummary at Greenwood."

The servant sullenly stooped, picked up the slip of ivory without a word, and turned to leave the room. But as he reached the door, Philemon found tongue.

"I'll trade that 'ere for the fowlin'-piece you set such store by," he offered.

The bondsman turned in the doorway and spoke bitterly. "This is to be got for no mess of pottage, if it is scorned," he said.

"I don't scorn—" began Janice, but her father broke in there.

"Give it me, fellow!" ordered the squire. "No bond-servant shall have my daughter's portrait."

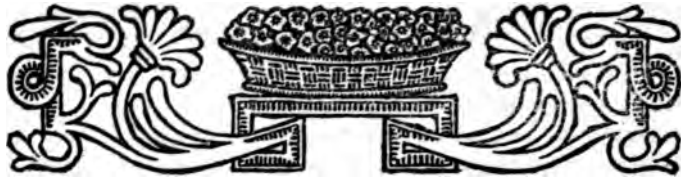
An angry look came into the man's eyes as he faced his master. "Come and take it, then," he challenged savagely, moving a step forward,—an action which for some reason impelled the squire to take a step backward.

"Oh, dad-da, don't," cried Janice, anxiously. "Charles, you would n't!"

Fownes turned to her, with the threat gone from his face and attitude. "There's my devil's temper again, Miss Janice," said he, in explanation and apology.

"Please go away," implored the girl, and the man went to the door. As he turned to close it, Janice said, "'T was very pretty, and — and — thank you, just the same."

The formalism of bygone generations was no doubt conducive to respectful manners, but not to confidential relations, and her parents knew so little of their daughter's nature as never to dream that they had occasioned the first suggestion of tenderness for the opposite sex the young girl's heart had ever felt. And love's flame is superior to physical law in that, the less ventilation it has, the more fiercely it burns.



XI

"'TIS AN ILL WIND THAT BLOWS NOBODY GOOD"

THE next ripple in the Greenwood life was due to more material circumstances, being inaugurated by the receipt of the Governor's writ, convening the Assembly of New Jersey. A trivial movement of a petty pawn on the chess-board of general politics, it nevertheless was of distinct importance in several respects to the Meredith family. Apparently the call meant only a few weeks' attendance of the squire's at Burlington, in the performance of legislative duties, and Janice's going with him to make a return visit to the Drinkers at Trenton. These, however, were the simplest aspects of the summons, and action by the citizens of Middlesex County quickly injected a more serious element into the programme.

The earliest evidence of this was the summoning by the Committee of Observation and Correspondence of a gathering to "instruct" the county representatives how they should vote on the question as to indorsing or disapproving the measures of the recent Congress. The notice of the meeting was read aloud by the Rev. Mr. McClave before his morning sermon one Sunday, and then he preached long and warmly from 2 Timothy, ii. 25, — "Instructing those that oppose themselves," — the purport of his argument being the duty of the whole community to join hands in resisting the enemies of the land. The preacher knew he was directly antagonising the views of his wealthiest parishioner and the father of his would-be wife, but that fact only served to make him speak the more forcefully and fervently. However hard and stern the old Presbyterian faith was, its upholders had the merit of knowing what they believed, and of stating that belief without flinch or waver.

As he sat and listened, not a little of the squire's old Madeira found its way into his face, and no sooner were the family seated in the sleigh than the wine seemed to find expression in his tongue as well.

"'Tis the last time I set foot in your church, Mrs. Meredith," he declared, loudly enough to make it evident that he desired those filing out of the doors to hear. "Never before have I —"

"Hold thy tongue, Lambert!" interrupted Mrs. Meredith, in a low voice. "Dost think to make a scene on the Sabbath?"

"Then let your parson hold his," retorted Mr. Meredith, but like a well-trained husband, in so low a voice as to be inaudible to all but the occupants of the sleigh. "Ge wug, Joggles! What is the land coming to, when such doctrines are preached in the pulpits; when those in authority are told 't is their duty to do what the riff-raff think best? As well let their brats and bunters tell us what to do. They'll not force me to attend their meeting, nor to yield a jot."

In fulfilment of his assertion, the squire sat quietly at home on the afternoon that the popular opinion of the county sought to voice itself, nodding his head over a volume of "Hale's Compleat Body of Husbandry." But as night drew near he was roused from his nap by the riding up of Squire Hennion and Philemon. Let it be confessed that, despite Mr. Meredith's contempt for what he styled the "mobocracy," his first question concerned the meeting.

"A pooty mess yer 've made of it, Meredith," growled Mr. Hennion.

"I!" cried the squire, indignantly. "'T is naught I had to do with it."

"An' 't is thet 'ere keepin' away dun the harm," scolded the elder Hennion. "Swamp it, yer let the hotheads control! Had all like yer but attended, they'd never hev bin able to carry some of them 'ere resolushuns. On mor'n one resolve a single vote would hev bin a negative."

"Pooh!" sneered the squire. "Sit down and warm thy feet while thee cools thy head, man. Ye'll not get me to believe that one vote only was needed to prevent 'em indorsing the Congress association."

"Sartin they approved the Congress doins, *nemine contra-dicente*, as they wuz baound ter do since all aginst kep away, but —"

"Dost mean to say ye voted for it?" demanded Mr. Meredith.

Squire Hennion's long, shrewd face slightly broadened as he smiled. "I wuz jest stepped over ter the ordinary ter git a nipperkin of ale when thet ere vote wuz took."

"Who let the hotheads control, then?" jerked out Mr. Meredith.

"'T ain't no sort of use ter hev my neebours set agin me."

"And ye 'll vote at Burlington as they tell ye?" fumed the squire.

"I'm rayther fearsome my rheumatiz will keep me ter hum this winter weather. I've had some mortal bad twinges naow an' agin."

"Now damn me!" swore the squire, rising and pacing the room with angry strides. "And ye come here to blame me for neglecting a chance to check 'em."

"I duz," responded Hennion. "If I go ter Assembly, 't won't prevent theer votin' fer what they wants. But if yer had attended thet 'ere meetin', we could hev stopped them from votin' ter git up a militia company an' ter buy twenty barrels —"

"Dost mean to say they voted rebellion?" roared Mr. Meredith, halting in his angry stride.

"It duz hev a squint toward it, theer ain't no denyin'. But I reckon it wuz baound ter come, vote ay or vote nay. Fer nigh three months all the young fellers hev been drillin' pooty reg'lar."

"Oh!" spoke up Janice. "Then that's what Charles meant when he said 't was drill took him to the village."

"What?" demanded the squire. "My bond-servant?"

"Ay. 'T is he duz the trainin', so Phil tells me."

Mr. Meredith opened the door into the hall, and bawled, "Peg!" Without waiting to give the maid time to answer the summons he roared the name again, and continued to fairly bellow it until the appearance of the girl, whom he then ordered to "find Charles and send him here." Slightly re-

lieved, he stamped back to the fire, muttering to himself in his ire.

A pause for a moment ensued, and then the elder Hennion spoke: "Waal, Meredith, hev yer rumpus with yer servant, but fust off let me say the say ez me and Phil come fer."

"And what's that?"

"I rayther guess yer know areddy," continued the father, while the son's face became of the colour of the hickory embers. "My boy's in a mighty stew about yer gal, but he can't git the pluck ter tell her; so seein' he needed some help an' since I'd come ez far ez Brunswick, says I we'll make one ride of it, an' over we comes ter tell yer fair an' open what he's hangin' araound fer."

Another red face was hurriedly concealed by its owner stooping over her tambour-frame, and Janice stitched away as if nothing else were worth a second thought. It may be noted, however, that, as a preliminary to further work the next morning, a number of stitches had to be removed.

"Ho, ho!" laughed the squire, heartily, and slapping Phil on the shoulder. "A shy bird, but a sly bird, eh? Oh, no! Mr. Fox thought the old dogs did n't know that he wanted little Miss Duck."

Already in an agony of embarrassment, this speech reduced Phil to still more desperate straits. He could look at his father only in a kind of dumb appeal, and that individual, seeing his son's helplessness, spoke again.

"I'd hev left the youngsters ter snook araound till they wuz able ter fix things by themselves," Mr. Hennion explained. "But the times is gittin' so troublous thet I want ter see Phil settled, an' not rampin' araound as young fellers will when they hain't got nuthin' ter keep them hum nights. An' so I reckon thet if it ever is ter be, the sooner the better. Yer gal won't be the wus off, hevin' three men ter look aout fer her, if it duz come on ter blow."

"Well said!" answered the squire. "What say ye, Matilda?"

"Oh, dadda," came an appeal from the tambour-frame, "I don't want to marry. I want to stay at home with —"

"Be quiet, child," spoke up her mother, "and keep thine

opinion to thyself till asked. We know best what is for thy good."

"He, he, he!" snickered the elder Hennion. "Gals hain't changed much since I wuz a-courtin'. They allus make aout ter be desprit set agin the fellers an' mortal daown on marryin', but, lordy me! if the men held off the hussies 'ud do the chasin'."

"Thee knows, Lambert," remarked his better half, "that I think Janice would get more discipline and greater godliness in —"

"I tell ye he sha'n't have her," broke in the squire. "No man who preaches against me shall have my daughter; no, not if 't were Saint Paul himself."

"For her eventual good I —"

"Damn her eventual —"

"I fear 't will come to that."

"Well, well, Patty, perhaps it will," acceded the squire. "But since 't is settled already by foreordination, let the lass have a good time before it comes. Wouldst rather marry the parson than Phil, Janice?"

"I don't want to marry any one," cried the girl, beginning to sob.

"A stiff-necked child thou art," said her mother, sternly. "Dost hear me?"

"Yes, mommy," responded a woful voice.

"And dost intend to be obedient?"

"Yes, mommy," sobbed the girl.

"Then if thee 'll not give her to the parson, Lambert, 't is best that she marry Philemon. She needs a husband to rule and chasten her."

"Then 't is a bargain, Hennion," said Mr. Meredith, offering a hand each to father and son.

"Yer see, Phil, it's ez I told yer," cried the elder. "Naow hev dun with yer stand-offishness an' buss the gal. Thet 'ere is the way ter please them."

Philemon faltered, glancing from one to another, for Janice was bent low over her work and was obviously weeping, — facts by no means likely to give courage to one who needed that element as much as did the suitor.

“A noodle!” sniggered Mr. Hennion. “’T ain’t ter be wondered at thet she don’t take ter yer. The jades always snotter first off, but they’d snivel worse if they wuz left spinsters — eh, squire?”

Thus encouraged, Phil shambled across the room and put his hand on the shoulder of the girl. At the first touch Janice gave a cry of desperation, and springing to her feet she fled toward the hall, her eyes still so full of tears that she did not see that something more than the door intervened to prevent her escape. In consequence she came violently in contact with Charles, and though to all appearance he caught her in his arms only to save her from falling, Janice, even in her despair, was conscious that there was more than mere physical support. To the girl it seemed as if an ally had risen to her need, and that the moment’s tender clasp of his arms was a pledge of aid to a sore-stricken fugitive.

“How now!” cried the squire. “Hast been listening, fellow?”

“I did not like to interrupt,” said Charles, drily.

“I sent for ye, because I’m told ye’ve been inciting rebellion against the king.

The man smiled. “’Tis little inciting they need,” he answered.

“Is ’t true that ye’ve been drilling them?” demanded the squire.

“Ask Phil Hennion,” replied the servant.

“What mean ye?”

“If ’t is wrong for me to drill, is ’t not wrong for him to be drilled?”

“How?” once more roared the squire. “Dost mean to say that Phil has been drilling along with the other villains?”

“Naow, naow, Meredith,” spoke up the elder Hennion. “Boys will be boys, yer know, an’ —”

“That’s enough,” cried the father. “I’ll have no man at Greenwood who takes arms against our good king. Is there no loyalty left in the land?”

“Naow look here, Meredith,” Mr. Hennion argued. “Theer ain’t no occasion fer such consarned highy-tighty airs. Yer can’t keep boys from bein’ high-sperited. What’s more —”

"High-spirited!" snapped the squire. "Is that the name ye give rebellion, Justice Hennion?"

"Thet 'ere is jest what I wuz a-comin' ter, Meredith," went on his fellow-justice. "Fust off I wuz hot agin his consarnin' himself, an' tried ter hold him back, but, lordy me! young blood duz love fightin', an' with all the young fellows possest, an' all the gals admirin', I might ez well a-tryed ter hold a young steer. So, says I, 't is the hand of Providence, fer no man kin tell ez what's ahead of us. There ain't no good takin' risks, an' so I'll side in with the one side, an' let Phil side in with t' other, an' then whatsoever comes, 't will make no differ ter us. Naow, ef the gal kin come it over Phil ter quit trainin', all well an' good, an' —"

"I'll tell ye what I think of ye," cried Mr. Meredith. "That ye're a precious knave, and Phil's a precious fool, and I want no more of either of ye at Greenwood."

"Now, squire," began Phil, "'t ain't —"

"Don't attempt to argue!" roared Mr. Meredith. "I say the thing is ended. Get out of my house, the pair of ye!" and with this parting remark, the speaker flung from the room, and a moment later the door of his office banged with such force that the whole house shook. Both the elder and younger Hennion stayed for some time, and each made an attempt to see the squire, but he refused obstinately to have aught to do with them, and they were finally forced to ride away.

Though many men were anxiously watching the gathering storm, a girl of sixteen laid her head on her pillow that night, deeply thankful that British regiments were mustering at Boston, and that America, accepting this as an answer to her appeal, was quietly making ready to argue the dispute with something more potent than petitions and associations.



XII

A BABE IN THE WOOD

THE following morning the squire went to the stable, and after soundly rating Charles for his share in the belligerent preparation of Brunswick, ordered him, under penalty of a flogging, to cease not only from exercising the would-be soldiers, but from all absences from the estate "without my order or permission." The man took the tirade as usual with an evident contempt more irritating than less passive action, speaking for the first time when at the end of the monologue the master demanded : —

"Speak out, fellow, and say if ye intend to do as ye are ordered, for if not, over ye go with me this morning to the sitting of the justices."

"I'm not the man to take a whipping, that I warn you," was the response.

"Ye dare threaten, do ye?" cried the master. "Saddle Jumper and Daisy, and have 'em at the door after breakfast. One rascal shall be quickly taught what rebellion ends in."

Fuming, the squire went to his morning meal, at which he announced his intention to ride to Brunswick and the purport of the trip.

"Oh, dadda, he — please don't!" begged Janice.

"And why not, child?" demanded her mother.

"Because he — oh! he is n't like most bondsmen and —"

"What did I tell thee, Lambert?" said Mrs. Meredith.

"Nonsense, Matilda," snorted the squire. "The lass gave me her word for 't —"

"Word!" ejaculated the wife. "What's a word or anything else when— Since thee's sent Phil off, the quicker thee comes to my mind, and gives her to the parson, the better."

"What mean ye by objecting to this fellow being flogged, Jan?" asked the father.

Poor Janice, torn between the two difficulties, subsided, and meekly responded, "I — Well, I don't like to have things whipped, dadda. But if Charles deserves it, of course he — he — 't is right."

"There!" said Mr. Meredith, "ye see the lass has the sense of it."

The subject was dropped, but after breakfast, as the crunch of the horse's feet sounded, Janice left the spinet for a moment to look out of the window, and it was a very doleful and pitiful face she took back to her task five minutes later.

When master and man drew rein in front of the Brunswick Court-house, it was obvious to the least heedful that something unusual was astir. Although the snow lay deep in front of the building and a keen nip was in the air, the larger part of the male population of the village was gathered on the green. Despite the chill, some sat upon the steps of the building, others bestowed themselves on the stocks in front of it, and still more stood about in groups, stamping their feet or swinging their arms, clearly too chilled to assume more restful attitudes, yet not willing to desert to the more comfortable firesides within doors.

Ordering the bond-servant to hitch the two horses in the meeting-house shed and then to come to the court-room, the squire made his way between the loafers on the steps, and attempted to open the door, only to discover that the padlock was still fast in the staple.

"How now, Mr. Constable?" he exclaimed, turning, and thus for the first time becoming conscious that every eye was upon him. "What means this?"

The constable, who was one of those seated on the stocks, removed a straw from between his lips, spat at the pillory post, much as if he were shooting at a mark, and remarked, "I calkerlate yer waan't at the meetin', squire?"

"Not I," averred Mr. Meredith.

"Yer see," explained the constable, "they voted that there should n't be no more of the king's law till we wuz more sartin of the king's justice, an' that any feller as opposed that 'ere resolution wuz ter be held an enemy ter his country an'

treated as such. That ain't the persition I'm ambeetious ter hold, an' so I did n't open the court-house."

"What?" gasped Mr. Meredith. "Are ye all crazy?"

"Mebbe we be," spoke up one of the listeners, "but we ain't so crazy by a long sight as him as issued that." The speaker pointed at the king's proclamation, and then, either to prove his contempt for the symbol of monarchy, or else to show the constable how much better shot he was, he neatly squirted a mouthful of tobacco juice full upon the royal arms.

"And where are the other justices?" demanded the squire, looking about as if in search of assistance.

"The old squire an' the paason wuz at the meetin', an' I guess they knew it 'ud only be wastin' time to attend this pertiklar sittin' of the court."

"Belza take them!" cried the squire. "They're a pair of cotswold lions, and I'll tell it them to their faces," he added, alluding to a humorous expression of the day for a sheep. "Here I have a rebellious servant, and I'd like to know how I'm to get warrant to flog him, if there is to be no court. Dost mean to have no law in the land?"

"I guess," retorted Bagby, "that if the king won't regard the law, he can't expect the rest of us to, nowadays. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and if there ever was a gander it's him," — a *mot* which produced a hearty laugh from the crowd.

"As justice of the peace I order ye to open this door, constable," called the squire.

The constable pulled out a bunch of keys and tossed it in the snow, saying, "'T ain't fer me to say there sha'n't be no sittin' of the court, an' if yer so set on tryin', why, try."

The squire deliberately went down two steps to get the keys, but the remaining six he took at one tumble, having received a push from one of the loafers back of him which sent his heavy body sprawling in the snow, his whip, hat, and, worst of all, his wig, flying in different directions. In a moment he had risen, cleared the snow from his mouth and eyes, and recovered his scattered articles, but it was not so easy to recover his dignity, and this was made the more difficult by the discovery that the bunch of keys had disappeared.

"Who took those keys?" he roared as soon as he could articulate, but the only reply the question produced was laughter.

"Don't you wherrit yourself about those keys, squire," advised Bagby. "They 're safe stowed where they won't cause no more trouble. And since that is done with, we 'd like to settle another little matter with you that we was going to come over to Greenwood about to-day, but seeing as you 're here, I don't see no reason why it should n't be attended to now."

"What's that?" snapped the squire.

"The meeting kind of thought things looked squawlish ahead, and that it would be best to be fixed for it, so I offered a resolution that the town buy twenty half-barrels of grain, and that —"

"Grain!" exclaimed the squire. "What in the 'nation can ye want with grain?"

"As we are all friends here, I'll tell you confidential sort, that we put it thataways, so as the resolutions need n't read too fiery, when they was published in the 'Gazette.' But the folks all knew as the grain was to be a black grain, that 's not very good eating."

"Why, this is treason!" cried Mr. Meredith. "Gunpowder! That 's —"

"Yes. Gunpowder," continued the spokesman, quite as much to the now concentrated crowd as to the questioner. "We reckon the time 's coming when we 'll want it swingeing bad. And the meeting seemed to think the same way, for they voted that resolution right off, and appointed me and Phil Hen-nion and Mr. Wetman a committee to raise a levy to buy it."

"Think ye a town meeting can lay a tax levy?" contemptuously demanded Mr. Meredith. "None but the —"

"T is n't to be nothing but a voluntary contribution," interrupted Bagby, grinning broadly, "and no man 's expected to give more than his proportion, as settled by his last rates."

"An' no man 's expected ter give less, nuther," said a voice back in the crowd.

"So if you 've nine pounds seven and four with you, squire," went on Bagby, "'t will save you a special trip over to pay it."



By the KING,
A P R O C L A M A T I O N,
 For suppressing Rebellion and Sedition.

G E O R G E R.



HEREAS many of Our Subjects in divers Parts of Our Colonies and Plantations in *North America*, misled by dangerous and ill-designing Men, and forgetting the Allegiance which they owe to the Power that has protected and sustained them, after various disorderly Acts committed in Disturbance of the Publick Peace, to the Obstruction of lawful Commerce, and to the Oppression of Our loyal Subjects carrying on the same, have at length proceeded to an open and avowed Rebellion, by arraying themselves in hostile Manner to withstand the Execution of the Law, and traitorously preparing, ordering, and levying War against Us; And whereas there is Reason to apprehend that such Rebellion hath been much promoted and encouraged by the traitorous Correspondence, Counsels, and Comfort of divers wicked and desperate Persons within this Realm. To the End therefore that none of Our Subjects may neglect or violate their Duty through Ignorance thereof, or through any Doubt of the Protection which the Law will afford to their Loyalty and Zeal; We have thought fit, by and with the Advice of Our Privy Council, to issue this Our Royal Proclamation, hereby declaring that not only all Our Officers Civil and Military are obliged to exert their utmost Endeavours to suppress such Rebellion, and to bring the Traitors to Justice; but that all Our Subjects of this Realm and the Dominions thereunto belonging are bound by Law to be aiding and assisting in the Suppression of such Rebellion, and to disclose and make known all traitorous Conspiracies and Attempts against Us, Our Crown and Dignity; And We do accordingly strictly charge and command all Our Officers as well Civil as Military, and all other Our obedient and loyal Subjects, to use their utmost Endeavours to withstand and suppress such Rebellion, and to disclose and make known all Treasons and traitorous Conspiracies which they shall know to be against Us, Our Crown and Dignity, and for that Purpose, that they transmit to One of Our Principal Secretaries of State, or other proper Officer, due and full Information of all Persons who shall be found carrying on Correspondence with, or in any Manner or Degree aiding or abetting the Persons now in open Arms and Rebellion against Our Government within any of Our Colonies and Plantations in *North America*, in order to bring to condign Punishment the Authors, Perpetrators, and Abettors of such traitorous Designs.

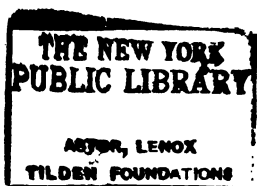
Given at Our Court at St. James's, the Twenty-third Day of *August*, One thousand seven hundred and seventy-five, in the Fifteenth Year of Our Reign

God save the King.

L O N D O N

Printed by *Charles Eyre* and *William Stansell*, Printers to the King's most Excellent Majesty 1775.

The King's "Rebellion" Proclamation.



"I'll see ye all damned first!" retorted the squire, warmly. "Why don't ye knock me down and take my purse, and have done with it?"

"'T would be the sensible thing with such a tarnal cross tyke," shouted some one.

"Everything fair and orderly is the way we work," continued the committee man. "But we want that nine pounds odd, and 'twill be odd if we don't get it."

"You'll not get it from me," asserted the squire, turning to walk away.

As he did so, half a dozen hands were laid upon his arms from behind, and he was held so firmly that he could not move.

"Shall we give him a black coat, Joe?" asked some one.

"No," negatived Bagby. "Let's see if being a 'babe in the wood' won't be enough to bring him to reason."

The slang term for occupants of the stocks was quite suggestive enough to produce instant result. The squire was dragged back till his legs were tripped from under him by the frame, the bunch of keys, which suddenly reappeared, served to unlock the upper board, and before the victim quite realised what had transpired he was safely fastened in the ignominious instrument. Regrettable as it is to record, Mr. Meredith began to curse in a manner highly creditable to his knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, but quite the reverse of his moral nature.

So long as the squire continued to express his rage and to threaten the bystanders with various penalties, the crowd stood about in obvious enjoyment, but anger that only excites amusement in others very quickly burns itself out, and in this particular case the chill of the snow on which the squire was sitting was an additional cause for a rapid cooling. Within two minutes his vocabulary had exhausted itself, and he relapsed into silence. The fun being over, the crowd began to scatter, the older ones betaking themselves indoors while the youngsters waylaid Charles, as he came from hitching the horses, and suggested a drill.

The bondsman shook his head and walked to the squire. "Any orders, Mr. Meredith?" he asked.

"Get an axe and smash this — thing to pieces."

"They would not let me," replied the man, shrugging his shoulders. "Hadst best do as they want, sir. You can't fight the whole county."

"I'll never yield," fumed the master.

Charles again shrugged his shoulders, and walking back to the group, said, "Get your firelocks."

In five minutes forty men were in line on the green, and as the greatest landholder of the county sat in the stocks, in a break-neck attitude, with a chill growing in fingers and toes, he was forced to watch a rude and disorderly attempt at company drill, superintended by his own servant. It was a clumsy, wayward mass of men, and frequent revolts from orders occurred, which called forth sharp words from the drill-master. These in turn produced retorts or jokes from the ranks that spoke ill for the discipline, and a foreign officer, taking the superficial aspect, would have laughed to think that such a system could make soldiers. Further observation and thought would have checked his amused contempt, for certain conditions there were which made these men formidable. Angry as they became at Fownes, not one left the ranks, though presence was purely voluntary, and scarce one of them, ill armed though he might be, but was able to kill a squirrel or quail at thirty paces.

When the drill had terminated, a result due largely to the smell of cooking which began to steal from the houses facing the green, Charles drew Bagby aside, and after a moment's talk, the two, followed by most of the others, crossed to the squire.

"Mr. Meredith," said Charles, "I've passed my word to Bagby that you'll pay your share if he'll but release you, and that you won't try to prosecute him. Wilt back up my pledge?"

The prisoner, though blue and faint with cold, shook his head obstinately.

"There! I told you how it would be," sneered Bagby.

"But I tell you he'll be frosted in another hour. 'T will be nothing short of murder, man."

"Then let him contribute his share," insisted Bagby.

"'T is unfair to force a man on a principle."

"Look here," growled Bagby. "We are getting tired of

your everlasting hectoring and attempting to run everything. Just because you know something of the manual don't make you boss of the earth."

The bondsman glanced at the squire, and urged, "Come, Mr. Meredith, you 'd better do it. Think how anxious Mrs. Meredith and — will be, aside from you probably taking a death cold, or losing a hand or foot."

At last the squire nodded his head, and without more ado Bagby stooped and unlocked the log. Mr. Meredith was so cramped that Charles had to almost lift him to his feet, and then give him a shoulder into the public room of the tavern, where he helped him into a chair before the fire. Then the servant called to the publican : —

"A jorum of sling for Mr. Meredith, and put an extra pepper in it."

"That sounds pretty good," said Bagby. "Just make that order for the crowd, and the squire 'll pay for it."

While the favourite drink of the period was sizzling in the fire, Mr. Meredith recovered enough to pull out his purse and pay up the debatable levy. A moment later the steaming drink was poured into glasses, and Bagby said : —

"Now, squire, do the thing up handsome by drinking to the toast of Liberty."

"I 'll set you a better toast than that," offered the bondsman.

"'T ain't possible," cried one of the crowd.

The servant raised his glass and with an ironical smile said : —

"Here 's to liberty and fair play, gentlemen."

"That 's a toast we can all drink," responded Bagby, "just as often as some one 'll pay for the liquor."



XIII

THE WORLD IN MINIATURE

THE exposure of the squire brought on a sharp attack of the gout which confined him to the house for nigh a month. Incidentally it is to be noted that his temper during this period was not confined, and when Philemon appeared one morning he was met with a reception that drove him away without a chance to plead his cause. Mrs. Meredith and Janice were compelled to listen to many descriptions as to what punitive measures their particular lord of creation intended to set in motion against the villagers when he should attend the Assembly, or when King George had reduced the land to its old-time order.

One piece of good fortune the attack brought its victim was its putting him in bed on the particular day selected for the committee of the town meeting to inform the squire as to the instruction voted by that gathering for his conduct in the Assembly. In default of an interview, they merely left an attested copy of the resolution, and had to rest satisfied, without knowing in what way their representative received it. Mrs. Meredith, Janice, and Peg did not remain in any such doubt.

Another unfortunate upon whom the vials of his wrath were poured out was the parson, who came a-calling one afternoon. News that he was in the parlour was sufficient to bring Mr. Meredith downstairs prematurely, where he enacted a high scene, berating the caller, and finally ordering him from the house.

A relapse followed upon the exertion and outburst, but even gout had its limitations, and finally the patient was sufficiently convalescent for preparations to begin for the journey to Trenton and Burlington.

It did not take Janice long one morning to pack her little leather-covered and brass-nail studded trunk, and, this done,

her conduct became not a little peculiar. After dinner she spent some time in spinet practice, and then rising announced to the elders that she must pack for the morrow's journey. Her absence thus explained, she left the room, only to steal through the kitchen, and catch Sukey's shawl from its hook in the passage to the wood-shed. Regardless of slippers and snow, she then sped toward the concealing hedge, and behind its friendly protection walked quickly to the stable. The door was rolled back enough to let the girl pass in quietly, and when she had done so, she glanced about in search of something. For an instant a look of disappointment appeared on her face, but the next moment, as a faint sound of scratching broke upon her ear, she stole softly to the feed and harness room, and peeked in.

The groom was sitting on a nail barrel, in front of the meal-bin, the cover of which was closed and was thus made to serve for a desk. On this were several sheets of what was then called *pro patria* paper, or foolscap, and most of these were very much bescribbled. An ink-horn and a sand-box completed the outfit, except for a quill in the hands of the bond-servant, which had given rise to the sound the girl had heard. Now, however, it was not writing, for the man was chewing the feather end with a look of deep thought on his face.

"O Clarion," he sighed, as the girl's glance was momentarily occupied with the taking in of these details, "why canst thou not give me a word to rhyme with morn? 'T will not come, and here 't is the thirteenth."

A low growl from Clarion, sounding like anything more than the desired rhyme, made the servant glance up, and the moment he saw the figure of some one, he rose, hastily bunched together the sheets of paper, and holding them in his hand cried, "Who's that?" in a voice expressing both embarrassment and anger. Then as his eyes dwelt on the intruder, he continued in an altered tone, "I ask your pardon, Miss Janice; I thought 't was one of the servants. They are everlastingly spying on me. Can I serve you?" he added, rolling the papers up and stuffing them into his belt.

Janice's eyes sought the floor, as she hesitatingly said, "I — I came to — to ask a favour of you."

"'T is but for you to name," replied the man, eagerly.

"Will you let me — I want — I should like Tibbie to see the — the picture of me, and I wondered if — if you would let me take it to Trenton — I'll bring it back, you know, and —"

"Ah, Miss Janice," exclaimed the servant, as the girl halted, "if you'd but take it as a gift, 't would pleasure me so!" While he spoke, without pretence of concealment he unbuttoned the top button of his shirt and taking hold of a string about his neck pulled forth a small wooden case, obviously of pocket-knife manufacture. Snapping the cord, he offered its pendant to Janice.

"I — I would keep it, Charles," replied Janice, "but you know mommy told me —"

"And what right has she to prevent you?" broke in Charles, warmly. "It does her no wrong, nor can it harm you to keep it. What right have they to tyrannise over you? 'Tis all of a piece with their forcing you to marry that awkward, ignorant put. Here, take it." The groom seized her hand, put the case in her palm, closed her fingers over, and held them thus, as if striving to make her accept the gift.

"Oh, Charles," cried the girl, very much flustered, "you should n't ask —"

"Ah, Miss Janice," he begged, "won't you keep it? They need never know."

"But I only wanted to show it to Tibbie," explained the girl, "to ask her if mommy was right when she said 't was monstrous flattered."

"'Tis an impossibility," responded the man, earnestly, though he was unable to keep from slightly smiling at the unconscious naïveté of the question. "I would she could see it in a more befitting frame, to set it off. If thou't but let me, I'd put it in the other setting. Then 't would show to proper advantage."

"Would it take long?"

"A five minutes only."

The girl threw open the shawl, and thrusting her hand under her neckerchief into the V-cut of her bodice, produced the miniature.

The servant recoiled a step as she held it out to him.

Then snatching rather than taking the trinket from her hand, he said, "That is no place for this."

"Why not?" asked Janice.

"Because she is unfit to rest there," cried the man. He pulled out a knife, and with the blade pried up the rim, and shook free the protective glass and slip of ivory. "Now 't is purged of all wrong," he said, touching the setting to his lips. "I would it were for me to keep, for 't has lain near your heart, and 't is still warm with happiness."

The speech and act so embarrassed Janice that she hurriedly said, "I really must n't stay. I've been too long as 't is, and —"

"'T will take but a moment," the servant assured her hastily. "Wilt please give me t' other one?" Throwing the miniature he had taken from the frame on the floor, he set about removing that of Janice from its wooden casing and fitting it to its new setting.

"Don't," cried Janice, in alarm, stooping to pick up the slip of ivory. "'T is not owing to you that 't was n't spoiled," she added indignantly, after a glance at it.

"Small loss if 't were!" responded the man, bitterly. "Promise me, Miss Janice, that you'll not henceforth carry it in your bosom?"

"'T is a monstrous strange thing to ask."

"I tell thee she's not fit to rest near a pure heart."

"How know you that?"

"How know I?" cried the man, in amazement. "Why —" There he stopped and knit his brows.

"I knew thou wert deceiving us when thee said 't was not thine," charged the girl.

"Nay, Miss Janice, 't was the truth I told you, though a quibble, I own. The miniature never was mine, tho' 't was once in my possession."

"Then how came you by it?"

"I took it by force from — never mind whom." The old bitter look was on the man's face, and anger burned in his eyes.

"You stole it!" cried the girl, drawing away from him.

"Not I," denied the man. "'T was taken from one who had less right to 't than I."

"You knew her?" questioned the girl.

"Ay," cried the man, with a kind of desperation. "I should think I did!"

"And — and you — you loved her?" she asked with a hesitancy which might mean that she was in doubt whether to ask the question, or perhaps that she rather hoped her surmise would prove wrong.

The young fellow halted in his work of trimming the ivory to fit the frame, and for a moment he stood, apparently looking down at his half-completed job, as it lay on the top of the meal-box. Then suddenly he put his hand to his throat as if he were choking, and the next instant he leaned forward, and, burying his face in his arms, as they rested on the whilom desk, he struggled to stifle the sobs that shook his frame.

"Oh, I did n't mean to pain you!" she cried in an agony of guilt and alarm.

Charles rose upright, and dashing his shirt sleeve across his eyes, he turned to the girl. "'T is over, Miss Janice," he asserted, "and a great baby I was to give way to 't."

"I can understand, and I don't think 't was babyish," said Janice, her heart wrung with sympathy for him. "She is so lovely!"

The man's lips quivered again, despite of his struggle to control himself. "That she is," he groaned. "And I — I loved her — My God! how I loved her! I thought her an angel from heaven; she was everything in life to me. When I fled from London, it seemed as if my heart was — was dead for ever."

"She was untrue?" asked Janice, with a deep sigh.

The servant's face darkened. "So untrue — Ah! 'T is not to be spoken. The two of them!"

"You challenged and killed him!" surmised Janice, excitedly. "And that's why you came to America."

The groom shook his head sadly. "Not that, Miss Janice. They robbed me of both honour and revenge. I was powerless to punish either — except by — Bah! I've done with them for ever."

"Foh mussy's sakes, chile," came Sukey's voice, "what

youse doin' hyar? Run quick, honey, foh your mah is 'quirin' foh youse."

"Oh, Luddy!" cried the girl, reaching out for the miniature.

"'T is not done, but I'll see to 't that you get it this evening," exclaimed Charles.

The girl turned and fled toward the house, closely followed by Sukey.

"Peg she come to de kitchen foh youse," the cook explained; "an' 'cause I dun see youse go out de back do', I specks whar youse gwine, an' I sens her back to say dat young missus helpin' ole Sukey, an' be in pretty quick, an' so dey never know."

"Oh, Sukey, you're a dear!"

"But, missy dear, doan youse do nuthin' foolish 'bout dat fellah, 'cause I 'se helped youse. Doan youse—"

"Of course I won't," asserted the girl. "I could n't, Sukey. You know I could n't."

"Dat 's right, honey. Ole Sukey knows she can trust youse. Now run right along, chile."

"What have you been doing, Janice?" asked her mother, as the girl entered the parlour.

"I've been in the kitchen with Sukey, mommy," replied Janice. And if there was wrong in the quibble, both father and mother were equally to blame with the girl, for "Ole Sukey" was actually better able to enter into her feelings and thoughts than either of them; and where obedience is enforced from authority and not from sympathy and confidence, there will be secret deceit, if not open revolt.

Left to himself, the bondsman finished trimming the ivory to a proper size, and neatly fitted it into the frame. Then he spread the papers out, and in some haste, for the winter's day was fast waning, he resumed his scribbling, varied by intervals of pen-chewing and knitting of brows. Finally he gave a sigh of relief, and taking a blank sheet he copied in a bold handwriting what was written on the paper he had last toiled over. Then picking up the miniature, he touched it to his lips. "She was sent to give me faith again in women," he said, as he folded the miniature into the paper.

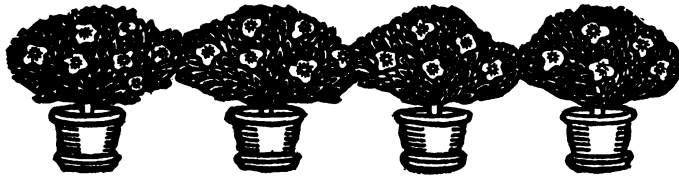
"Well, old man," he remarked, as he passed from the stable,

to the dog, who had followed in his footsteps, and sought to attract his attention by fawning upon him, "has blindman's holiday come at last? Wait till I bestow this, and get a bite from Sukey to put in my pocket, and we'll be off for a look at the rabbits. 'T is a poor sport, but 't will do till something better comes. Oh for a war!"

The bondsman passed into the kitchen, and made his plea to Sukey for a supper he could take away with him. The request was granted, and while the cook went to the larder to get him something, Charles stepped into the hall and listening intently he stole upstairs and tapped gently on a door. Getting no reply, he opened it, and tiptoeing hastily to the dressing-stand, he tucked the packet under the powder-box. A minute later he was back in the kitchen, and ere long was stamping through the snow, whistling cheerfully, which the hound echoed by yelps of excited delight.

Janice was unusually thoughtful all through supper, and little less so afterwards. She was sent to her room earlier than usual, that she might make up in advance for the early start of the journey, and she did not dally with her disrobing, the room being almost arctic in its coldness. But after she had put on the short night-rail that was the bed-gown of the period, the girl paused for a moment in front of her mirror, even though she shivered as she did so.

"I really thought 't was for me he cared," she said. "But she is so much more beautiful than —" Janice tucked the fly-away locks into the snug-fitting nightcap, which together with the bed-curtains formed the protections from the drafts inevitable to leaky windows and big chimneys, and having thus done her best to make herself ugly, she blew out her candle, and as she crept into bed, she remarked, "'T was very foolish of me."



XIV

A QUESTION CONCERNING THALIA

ALL was animation at Greenwood the next morning, while yet it was dark, and as Janice dressed by candle-light, she trembled from something more than the icy chill of the room. The girl had been twice in her life to New York, once each to Newark and to Burlington, and though her visits to Trenton were of greater number, the event was none the less too rare an occurrence not to excite her. Her mother had to order her sharply to finish what was on her plate at breakfast, or she would scarce have eaten.

"If thou dost not want to be frozen, lass, before we get to Trenton," warned the squire, "do as thy mother says. Stuff cold out of the stomach, or 't is impossible to keep the scamp out of the blood."

"Yes, dadda," said the girl, obediently falling to once more. After a few mouthfuls she asked, "Dadda, who was Thalia?"

"'T was a filly who won the two-year purse at the Philadelphia races in sixty-eight," the squire informed her, between gulps of sausage and buckwheat cakes.

"Was she very lovely?" asked Janice, in a voice of surprise.

"No. An ill-shaped mare, but with a great pace."

The girl looked thoughtful for a moment and then asked, "Is that the only one there is?"

"Only what?" demanded her mother.

"The only Thalia?"

"'T is the only one I've heard of," said the squire.

"Thou'rt wrong, Lambert," corrected his spouse, in wisely fashion. "'T was one of those old heathens with horns, or tail, or something, I forget exactly. What set thy mind on that, child? Hast been reading some romance on the sly?"

"No, mommy," denied the girl.

"Put thy thoughts to better uses, then," ordered the mother.

"Think more of thy own sin and corruption and less of what is light and vain."

It had been arranged that Thomas was to drive the sleigh, the squire preferring to leave Fownes in care of the remaining horses. It was Charles, however, who brought down the two trunks, and after he had put them in place he suggested, "If you'll take seat, Miss Janice, I'll tuck you well in." Spreading a large bearskin on the seat and bottom of the sleigh, he put in a hot soapstone, and very unnecessarily took hold of the little slippered feet, and set them squarely upon it, as if their owner were quite unequal to the effort. Then he folded the robe carefully about her, and drew the second over that, allowing the squire, it must be confessed, but a scant portion for his share.

"Thank you, Charles," murmured the girl, gratefully. "Of course he's a bond-servant and he has a horrid beard," she thought, "but it is nice to have some one to — to think of your comfort. If he were only Philemon!"

The bondsman climbed into the rear of the sleigh, that he might fold the back part of the skin over her shoulders. The act brought his face close to the inquirer, and she turned her head and whispered, "Who was Thalia?"

"'T was one of —"

"Charles, get out of that sleigh," ordered Mrs. Meredith, sharply. "Learn thy place, sir. Janice, thou'rt quite old enough to take care of thyself. We'll have no whispering or coddling, understand."

The bondsman sullenly obeyed, and a moment later the sleigh started. The servant looked wistfully after it until the sound of the bells was lost, and then, with a sigh, he went to his work.

With all the vantage of the daylight start, it took good driving among the drifts to get over the twenty-eight miles that lay between Greenwood and Trenton before the universal noon dinner, and as the sleigh drew up at the Drinkers' home on the main street of the village, the meal was in the air if not on the table.

For this reason the two girls had not a chance for a mo-

ment's confidence before dinner ; and though Janice was fairly bursting with all that had happened since Tibbie's visit, the departure of the squire for Burlington immediately the meal was ended, and the desire of Tabitha's father and aunt to have news of Mrs. Meredith and of the doings "up Brunswick way," filled in the whole afternoon till tea time — if the misnomer can be used, for, unlike the table at Greenwood, tea was a tabooed article in the Drinker home. One fact worth noting about the meal was that Janice asked if any of them knew who Thalia was.

"Ay," said Mr. Drinker, "and the less said of her the better. She was a lewd creature that —"

"Mr. Drinker!" cried Tabitha's aunt. "Thee forgets there are gentlewomen present. Wilt have some preserve, Janice?"

"No, I thank you," said the girl. "I'm not hungry." And she proved it by playing with what was on her plate for the rest of the meal.

Not till the two girls retired did they have an opportunity to exchange confidences. The moment they were by themselves, Tabitha demanded, "What made thee so serious to-night?"

"Oh, Tibbie," sighed Janice, dolefully, "I'm very unhappy!"

"What over?"

"I — he — Charles — I'm afraid he — and yet — 'Tis something he wrote, but whether in joke or — Mr. Evatt said he insulted me at the tavern — Yet 't is so pretty that — and mommy interrupted just —"

"What art thou talking about, Jan?" exclaimed Tibbie.

Janice even in her disjointed sentences had begun to unlace her travelling bodice, — for with a prudence almost abnormal this one frock was not cut low, — and she now produced from her bosom a paper which she unfolded, and then offered to Tibbie with a suggestion of hesitation, asking "Dost think he meant to insult me?"

Tabitha eagerly took the sheet, and read —

TO THALIA

*These lines to her my passion tell,
Describe the empire of her spell;
A love which naught will e'er dispel,
That flames for sweetest Thalia.*

Janice Meredith

*The sun that brights the fairest morn,
The stars that gleam in Capricorn,
Do not so much the skies adorn
As does my lovely Thalia.*

*The tints with which the rose enchants,
The fragrance which the violet grants;
Each doth suggest, but ne'er supplants,
The charms of dainty Thalia.*

*To gaze on her is sweet delight:
'Tis heaven whene'er she's in my sight,
But when she's gone, 't is endless night—
All 's dark without my Thalia.*

*I vow to her, by God above,
By hope of life, by depth of love,
That from her side I ne'er will rove,
So much love I my Thalia.*

"How monstrous pretty!" cried Tabitha. "I'm sure he meant it rightly."

"I thought 't was a beautiful valentine," sighed Janice,—"and 't was the first I ever had—but dad says she was an ill-shaped mare—and mommy says 't was something with a tail—and 't is almost as bad to have her a wicked woman—so I'm feared he meant it in joke—or worse—"

"I don't believe it," comforted Tibbie. "He may have made a mistake in the name, but I'm sure he meant it; that he—well—thou knows. And if thee copies it fair, and puts in 'Delia,' or 'Celia,' 't will do to show to the girls. I wish some one would send me such a valentine."

Made cheerful by her friend's point of view, Janice went on with more spirit,—

"Nor is that the end." She took from her trunk a handkerchief and unwrapping it, produced the unset miniature. "He let me keep it," she said.

"How mighty wonderful!" again exclaimed Tibbie, growing big-eyed. "Who—"

"Furthermore, and in continuation, as Mr. McClave always says after his ninthly," airily interrupted Janice, drawing from

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her bosom the portrait of herself. "Who's that, Tibbie Drinker?"

"Janice!" cried the person so challenged. "How lovely! Who — Did Mr. Peale come to Greenwood?"

"Not he. Who, think you, did it?"

"I vow if I can guess."

"Charles!"

"No!" gasped Tibbie, properly electrified. "Thee is cozening me."

"Not for a moment," cried Janice, delightedly.

"Tell me everything about *all*," was Tabitha's rapturous demand.

It took Janice many minutes, and Tibbie was called upon to use many exclamation and question marks, ere the tale of all these surprises was completed. Long before it had come to a finish, the two girls were snuggled together in bed, half in real love, as well as for the mutual animal heat, and half that they might whisper the lower. The facts, after many interruptions and digressions, having been narrated, Janice asked, —

"Whom, think you, Charles loves, Tibbie?"

"'Tis very strange! From his valentine and miniature I should think 't was thee. But from what he told thee —"

"'T is exactly that which puzzles me."

"Oh, Janice! He — Perhaps thee was right. He may be a villain who is trying to beguile thee."

"For what could — Then why should he tell me about her?"

"That — well — 't is beyond me."

"If 't had not been for coming away, I — that is —" The girl hesitated and then said, "Tibbie?"

"What?"

"Dost think — I mean —" The girl drew her bedfellow closer, and in an almost inaudible voice asked, "Would it be right, think you — when I go back, you know — to — to encourage him — that is, to give him a chance to tell me — so as to find out?"

The referee of this important question was silent for long enough to give a quality of consideration to her opinion, and

then decided, "I think thee shouldst. 'Tis a question that thou hast a right to know about." Having given the ruling, this most upright judge changed her manner from one conveying thought to one suggesting eagerness, and asked, "Oh, Janice, if he does — if thee finds out anything, wilt thee tell it me?"

"Ought I?" asked Janice, divided between the pleasure of monopolising a secret and the enjoyment of sharing it.

"Surely thee ought," cried Tabitha. "After telling me so much, thou shouldst — for Charles' sake. Otherwise I might misjudge him."

"Then I'll tell you everything," cried Janice, clearly happy in the decision.

"And if he does love you, Jan?" suggestively remarked Tibbie.

"'Twill be vastly exciting," said Janice. "You know, Tibbie, it frightens me a little, for he's just the kind of man to do something desperate."

"And — and you would n't —"

"Tibbie Drinker! A redemptioner!"

"But Janice, he must have been a gentle —"

"What he was, little matters," interrupted the girl. "He's a bond-servant now, and even if he were n't, he'd have a bristly beard — Ugh!"

"Poor fellow," sighed Tabitha. "'Tis not his fault!"

"Nor is't mine," retorted Janice.

A pause of some moments followed and then Janice asked: "Dost think I am promised to Mr. Evatt, Tibbie?" — for let it be confessed that every incident of what she had pledged herself not to tell had been poured out to her confidant.

"I think so," whispered the girl, "and he being used to court ways would surely know."

"He's — well, he's a fine figure of a man," owned Janice. "And tho' I ne'er intended it, I'd rather 't would be he than Philemon Hennion or the parson."

"What if thy father and mother should not consent?" said Tabitha.

"'T would be lovely!" cried Janice, ecstatically. "Just like a romance, you know. And being court-bred, he'd know

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how to — well — how to give it *éclat*. Oh, Tibbie, think of making a runaway match and of going to court!"

Much as Tabitha loved her friend, the little green-eyed monster gained possession of her momentarily. "He may be deceiving thee," she suggested. "Perhaps he never was there."

"Nay. He knows all the titled people. He was at one of Lady Grafton's routs, Tibbie, and was spoke to by the Duke of Cumberland!"

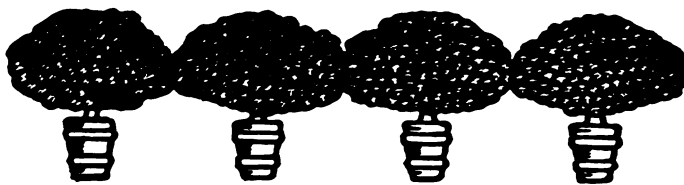
For a man falsely to assert acquaintance with a royal duke seemed so impossible to the girl that this was accepted as indisputable proof; driven from her first position, Tibbie remarked, "Perhaps he won't return. Many's the maid been cozened and deserted by the men."

For a moment, either because this idea did not please Janice or because she needed time to digest it, there was silence.

"Oh, Janice," sighed Tibbie, presently, "'t is almost past belief that thee has had so much happen to thee."

But a few weeks before the girl thought the chief part of her experiences the most cruel luck that had ever befallen maiden. Yet so quickly does youth put trouble in the past, and so respondent is it to the romantic view of things, that she now promptly answered,—

"Is't not, Tibbie! Am I not a lucky girl? If I only was certain about Thalia, I should be so happy."



XV

QUESTIONS OF DELICACY

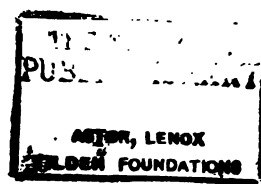
OF the time Janice spent at Trenton little need be said. Compared with Greenwood, the town was truly almost riotous. Neither Presbyterian nor Quaker approved of dancing, and so the regular weekly assemblies were forbidden fruit to the girls, and Janice and Tibbie were too well born to be indelicately of the throng who skated long hours on Assanpink Creek, or to take part in the frequent coasting-parties. But of other amusements they had, in the expression of the day, "a great plenty." Four teas,—but without that particular beverage,—two quilting-bees, one candy-pulling and one corn-popping, three evenings at singing-school, and a syllabub party supplied such ample social dissipation to Janice that life seemed for the time fairly to whirl.

Not the least of the excitement, it must be confessed, was the conquest by Janice of a young Quaker cousin of Tabitha's named Penrhyn Morris. Two other of the Trenton lads, too, began to behave in a manner so suspicious to the girls as to call for much discussion. Tibbie as well had several swains, who furnished still further subjects of conversation after sleeping hours had come. Several times sharp reproofs were shouted through the partition from Miss Drinker's room, but the whispering only sank in tone and not in volume.

One incident not to be omitted was the appearance of Philemon, nominally on business, in Trenton; but he called upon the Drinkers, and remained to dinner when asked. He stayed on and on after that meal, wearying the two girls beyond measure by the necessity of maintaining a conversation, until, just as the desperation point was reached, Tibbie introduced a topic which had an element of promise in it.



"Quilting bees and candy-pulling supplied ample social dissipation."



"Hast thou seen Charles Fownes of late?" she asked of the mute awkward figure; and though Janice did not look up, there was a moment's flicker of her eyelashes.

"All I wants ter," said Phil, sulkily. "An' I guess that ere 's the feelin' pretty generally."

"Why?" demanded Tabitha, after a glance at Janice.

"'Cause of the airs he takes. He called me a put because I was a bit slow — ter his mind — in learnin' the manual, an' he's got a tongue an' a temper like a hedgehog. But the fellers paid him off come Saturday week."

"How?" asked Janice, dropping her pose of indifference.

"He's been expectin' ter be appointed captain of the Brunswick Invincibles, when they was trained, but he put on such airs, an' was so sharp an' bitin' with his tongue, that when they voted for officers last week I'll be dinged if they did n't drop him altogether. He did n't get a vote for so much as a corporal's rank. He was in a stew, I tells you."

"What did he do?" questioned Tabitha.

"He was so took aback," snickered Philemon, "that he up and says 'twas the last he'd have ter do with 'em, an' that they was a lot of clouts an' clodpates, an' they'd got a captain ter match."

"Was that you?" cruelly asked Janice.

"No. 'Twas Joe Bagby," replied Phil, not so much as seeing the point.

"The village loafer and ne'er-do-weel," exclaimed Janice, reflecting her father's view.

"He ain't idlin' much these-a-days," asserted Philemon, "and the boys all like him for his jokes an' good-nature. I tell you 'twas great sport ter see him an' your redemptioner give it ter each other. Fownes, he said that if 'twere n't better sport ter catch rabbits, he'd mightily enjoy chasin' the whole company of Invincibles with five grenadiers of the guard, an' Bagby he sassed back by sayin' that Charles need n't be so darned cocky, for he'd run from the regulars hisself, an' then your man tells Joe ter give his red rag a holiday by talkin' about what he know'd of, for then he'd have ter be silent, an' then the captain says he was a liar, and Charles knocks him down, an' stood over him and made him take it

back. An' Bagby he takes it back, sayin' as how his own words was very good eatin' anyways. I tell you, the whole town enjoyed that 'ere afternoon."

"I suppose they made you an officer?" said Miss Meredith, with unconcealed contempt.

"No, Miss Janice," Philemon eagerly denied, "an' that's what I come over to tell you. Seein' that you an' the squire did n't like my drillin', I've left the company, an' I won't go back, I pass you my word."

"Tis nothing to me what you do," responded Janice, crushingly.

"Don't say that, Miss Janice," entreated Phil.

"Is thee not ashamed," exclaimed Tabitha, "to seek to marry a girl against her wishes? If I were Janice, I'd never so much as look at thee."

"She never said as how she —" stammered Hennion.

"That was nothing," continued Tibbie. "Thee shouldst ave known it. The idea of asking the father first!"

"But that's the regular way," ejaculated Phil, in evident bewilderment.

"To marry a girl when she does n't choose to!" snapped Tibbie. "A man of any decency would find out — on the sly — if she wanted him."

"She never would —"

"As if the fact that she would n't was n't enough!" continued Tibbie, with anything but Quaker meekness. "Dost think, if she wanted thee, she'd have been so offish?"

Phil, with a sadly puzzled look on his face, said, "I know I ain't much of a sharp at courtin', Miss Janice, an' like as not I done it wrong, but I loves you, that's certain, an' I would n't do anything ter displeasure you, if I only know'd what you wanted. Dad he says that I was n't rampageous enough ter suit a girl of spirit, an' that if I'd squoze you now an' again, 'stead of —"

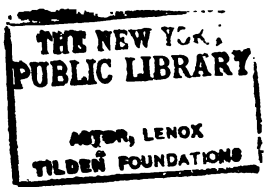
"That's enough," said Janice. "Mr. Hennion, there is the door."

"Thou art a horrid creature!" added Tibbie.

"I ain't goin' till I've had it all out with you," asserted Phil, with a dogged determination.



"Trenton lads began to behave in a manner so suspicious to the girls."



"Then you force us to leave you," said Janice, rising.

Just as she spoke, the door was thrown open, and Mr. Meredith entered. His eye happened to fall first on Philemon, and without so much as a word of greeting to the girls, he demanded angrily, "Ho! what the devil are ye doing here? 'Tis all of a piece that a traitor to his king should work by stealth."

Even the worm turns, and Philemon, already hectoring to desperation by the girls, gave a loose to his sense of the wrong and injustice that it seemed to him every one conspired to heap upon him. "I've done no hugger-muggery," he roared, shaking his fist in the squire's face, "an' the man's a tarnal liar who says I have."

"Don't try to threaten me, sir!" roared back the squire, but none the less retiring two steps. "Your father's son can't bully Lambert Meredith. But for his cowardice, and others like him, but for the men of all sides and no side, we'd have prevented the Assembly's approving the damned resolves of the Congress. Marry a daughter of mine! I'll see ye and your precious begetter in hell first. Don't let me find ye snooking about my girl henceforth, or 't will fare ill with ye that I warn ye."

"If 't war n't that you are her father an' an old man, I'll teach you a lesson," growled Phil, as he went to the door; "as 'tis, look out for yourself. You has enemies enough without makin' any more."

"There's a good riddance to him," chuckled the squire. "Well, hast a kiss for thy dad, Jan?"

"A dozen," responded the girl. "But what brought you back? Surely the Assembly has not adjourned?"

"'Tis worse than that," asserted the squire. "For a week we held the rascals at bay, but yesterday news came from England that the ministry had determined not to yield, and in a frenzy the Assembly indorsed the Congress's doings on the spot. As a consequence this morning the king's governor dissolved us, and the writs will shortly be out for a new election. So back I must get me to Brunswick to attend to my poll. I bespoke a message to Charles by Squire Perkins, who rid on to Morristown, telling him to be here with the sleigh

to-morrow as early as he could ; and meanwhile must trust to some Trenton friend or to the tavern for a bed, if thy father, Tabitha, can't put me up."

Charles reported to the squire at an hour the following morning which indicated either a desire for once to please his master, or some other motive, for an obedience so prompt must have necessitated a moonlight start from Greenwood in order to reach Trenton so early. He was told to bait his horses at the tavern, and the time this took was spent by the girls in repeating farewells.

"Tis a pity thee hast to go before Friend Penrhyn hath spoken," said Tibbie, regretfully.

"Is n't it?" sighed Janice. "I did so want to see how he'd say it."

"You may — perhaps Charles — " brokenly but suggestively remarked Tibbie.

"Perhaps," responded Janice, "but 't will be very different. I know he'll — well, he'll be abrupt and — and excited, and will — his sentences will not be well thought out beforehand. Now Penrhyn would have spoken at length and feelingly. 'T would have been monstrously enjoyable."

"At least thee'll find out who Thalia is."

"Oh, Tibbie, I fear me I sha'n't dare. I tried to ask Mr. Taggart, who, being college-bred, ought to know, but I was so afraid she was a wicked woman, that I began to blush before I'd so much as got out the first word. I wish I was pale and delicate like Prissy Glover. 'Tis mortifying to be so healthy."

"Thy waist is at least two inches smaller than hers, when 't is properly laced."

"But I have red cheeks," moaned Janice, "and, oh, Tibbie, at times I have *such* an appetite!"

"Oh, Jan! so have I," confided Miss Drinker in the lowest of whispers, as if fearing even the walls. "Sometimes when the men are round, I'd eat twice as much but for the fear they'd think me coarse and —"

"Gemini, yes!" assented Janice, when the speaker paused. "Many and many's the time I've wanted more. But 't is all right as long as the men don't know that we do."

"Here's the sleigh," interrupted Tabitha, going to the door. "Come out quickly, while thy father is having the stirrup cup, and I'll ask him about Thalia."

"Oh, will you?" joyfully cried Janice. "Tibbie, you're a —"

Miss Meredith's speech was stopped by the two coming within hearing of the redemptioner, who promptly removed his cap. "'T will be good to have you back at Greenwood, Miss Janice," he said with a bow.

"How gracefully he does it!" whispered Tabitha, as they approached the sleigh. Then aloud she asked, "Charles, wilt tell me who — who — who was chosen captain of the 'Invincibles'?"

The question brought a scowl to the man's face, and both girls held their breath, expecting an outbreak of temper, while Tabitha to herself bemoaned that so unfortunate a subject sprang first into her thoughts to replace the question she dared not put. But before the groom replied, the scowl changed suddenly into a look of amusement, and when he spoke, it was to say, —

"'T is past belief, Miss Tabitha, except they want to save their skins by never fighting. 'T was Joe Bagby the bumpkins chose — a fellow I've knocked down without his resenting it. A cotswold lion, who works his way by jokes and by hand-shakes. He's the best friend of every one who ever lived, and I make no doubt, if a British regiment appears, he'll say he loves the lobsters too much to lead the 'Invincibles' against them."

"No doubt," agreed Tibbie. "Canst tell me also who — who — how Clarion is?"

But this question was never answered, for the squire appeared at this point, and the sleigh was quickly speeding towards Greenwood. It was after dark when it drew up at its destination, for the spring thaw was beginning, and the roads soft and deep. Janice was so stiff with the long sitting and the cold that she needed help both in alighting and in climbing the porch steps. This the groom gave her, and when she was safely in front of the parlor fire, he assisted in the removing of her wraps, while Mrs. Meredith performed a like service for the squire in the hallway.

"Dost remember your question, Miss Janice," asked Charles, "just as you drove away from Greenwood?"

"Yes."

"She was one of the three graces."

"Was she very beautiful?"

"The ancients so held her, but they had never seen you, Miss Janice."

The girl had turned away as she nonchalantly asked the last question, and so Charles could not see the charmingly demure smile that her face assumed, nor the curve of the lips, and perhaps it was fortunate for him that he did not. Yet all Miss Meredith said was,—

"Not that I cared to know, but I knew Tibbie would be curious."



XVI

A VARIETY OF CONTRACTS

THE spring thaw set in in earnest the day after the squire's return to Greenwood, and housed the family for several days. No sooner, however, did the roads become something better than troughs of mud than the would-be Assemblyman set actively to work for his canvass of the county, daily riding forth to make personal calls on the free and enlightened electors, in accordance with the still universal British custom of personal solicitation. What he saw and heard did not tend to improve his temper, for the news that the Parliament was about to vote an extension to the whole country of the punitive measures hitherto directed against Massachusetts had lighted a flame from one end of the land to the other. The last election had been with difficulty carried by the squire, and now the prospect was far more gloomy.

When a realising sense of the conditions had duly dawned on the not over-quick mind of the master of Greenwood, he put pride in his pocket and himself astride of Joggles, and rode of an afternoon to Boxley, as the Hennions' place was named. Without allusion to their last interview, he announced to the senior of the house that he wished to talk over the election.

"He, he, he!" snickered Hennion. "Kinder gettin' anxious, heigh? I calkerlated yer'd find things sorter pukish."

"Tush!" retorted Meredith, making a good pretence of confidence. "'Tis mostly wind one hears, and 't will be another matter at the poll. I rid over to say that tho' we may not agree in private matters, 'tis the business of the gentry to make head together against this madness."

"I see," snarled Hennion. "My boy ain't good enuf fer yer gal, but my votes is a different story, heigh?"

"Votes for votes is my rule," rejoined the squire. "The old arrangement, say I. My tenants vote for ye, and yours for me."

"Waal, this year theer's ter be a differ," chuckled Hennion. "I've agreed ter give my doubles ter Joe, an' he's ter give hisn ter me."

"Joe! What Joe?"

"Joe Bagby."

"What!" roared the squire. "Art mad, man? That good-for-nothing scamp run for Assembly?"

"Joe ain't no fool," asserted Hennion. "An' tho' his edication and grammer ain't up ter yers an' mine, squire, he thinks so like the way folks ere jest naow a-thinkin' thet it looks ter me as if he wud be put in."

"The country is going to the devil!" groaned Mr. Meredith. "And ye'll throw your doubles for that worthless—"

"I allus throw my doubles fer the man as kin throw the most doubles fer me," remarked Hennion. "An' I ain't by no means sartin haow many doubles yer kin split this year."

"Pox me, the usual number!"

"Do yer leaseholds all pay theer rents?"

"Some have dropped behind, but as soon as there's law in the land again they'll come to the rightabout."

"Exactly," sniggered Hennion. "As soon as theer's law. But when's thet 'ere goin' ter be? Mark me, the tenants who dare refuse ter pay theer rent, dare vote agin theer landlord. An' as Joe Bagby says he'll do his durndest ter keep the courts closed, I guess the delinquents will think he's theer candidate. Every man as owes yer money, squire, will vote agin yer, come election day."

"And ye'll join hands with these thieves and vote with Bagby in Assembly?"

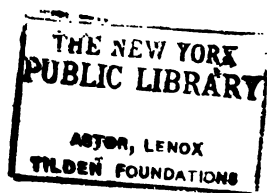
"Guess I mought do wus. But if thet 'ere's displeasin' ter yer, jest blame yerself for't."

"How reason ye that, man?"

"Cuz I had it arranged thet I wuz ter side in with the king, and Phil wuz ter side in with the hotheads. But yer gal



"Listen, ye dog! Sweet sixteen, rosy sixteen, bashful sixteen!"



hez mixed Phil all up, so he 's turned right over an' talks ez ef he wuz Lord North or the Duke of Bedford. Consumaquently, since I don't see no good of takin' risks, I hed ter swing about an' jine the young blood."

What the squire said in reply, and continued to say until he had made his exit from the Hennion house, is far better omitted. In his wrath he addressed a monologue to his horse, long after he had passed through the gate of Boxley; until, in fact, he met Phil, to whom, as a better object for them than Joggles, the squire at once transferred his vituperations.

Instead of going on in his original direction, Philemon turned his horse and rode along with the squire, taking the rating in absolute silence. Only when Mr. Meredith had expressed and re-expressed all that was in him to say did the young fellow give evidence that his dumbness proceeded from policy.

"Seems ter me, squire," he finally suggested, "like you're layin' up against me what don't suit you 'bout dad. I've done my bestest ter do what you and Miss Janice set store by, an' it does seem ter me anythin' but fairsome ter have a down on me, just because of dad. 'Tain't my fault I've got him for a father; I had n't nothin' ter do with it, an' if you have any one ter pick a quarrel with, it must be with God Almighty, who fixed things as they is. I've quit drillin'; I've spoke against the Congress; an' there ain't nothin' else I would n't do ter get Miss Janice."

"Go to the devil, then," advised the squire. "No son of—" There the squire paused momentarily, and after a brief silence ejaculated, "Eh!" After another short intermission he laughed aloud, as if pleased at something which had occurred to him. "Why, Phil, my boy," he cried, slapping his own thigh, "we'll put a great game up on thy dad. We'll show him he's not the only fox hereabout."

"And what 'ere's that?"

"What say ye to being my double in the poll, lad?"

"Run against father?" ejaculated Phil.

"Ay. We'll teach him to what trimming and time-serving come. And be damned to him!"

"That 'ere's all very well for you," responded Hennion, "but he hain't got the whip hand of you like he has of me. He would n't stand my —"

"He'd have to," gleefully interrupted the squire. "Join hands with me, lad, and I'll fix it so ye can snap your fingers at him."

"But —" began Phil.

"But," broke in the squire. "Nonsense! No but, lad. Butter — ay, and cream it shall be. Let him turn ye off. There's a home at Greenwood for ye, if he does — and something better than that too. Sixteen, ye dog! Sweet sixteen, rosy sixteen, bashful sixteen, glowing sixteen, run-away-and-want-to-be-found sixteen!"

"She don't seem ter want me ter find her," sighed Phil.

"Fooh!" jeered the father. "There's only two kinds of maids, as ye'd know if ye'd been out in the world as I have — those that want a husband and those that don't. But six months married, and ye can't pick the one from t'other, try your best. There's nothing brings a lass to the round-about so quick as having to do what she does n't want. They are born contrary and skittish, and they can't help shying at fences and gates, but give 'em the spur and the whip, and over they go, as happy as a lark. And I say so, Janice will marry ye, and mark my word, come a month she'll be complaining that ye don't fondle her enough."

Mr. Meredith's pictorial powers, far more than his philosophy, were too much for Philemon to resist. He held out his hand, saying, "'T is a bargain, squire; an' I'll set to on a canvass to-day."

"Well said," responded the elder, heartily. "And that's not all, Phil, that ye shall get from it. I've a tidy lot of money loaned to merchants in New York, and I'll get it from 'em, and we'll buy the mortgages on your father's lands. Who'll have the whip hand then, eh? Oh! we'll smoke the old fox before we've done with him. His brush shall be well singed."

The compact thus concluded to their common satisfaction, the twain separated, and the squire rode the remaining six miles in that agreeable state of enjoyment which comes from

the sense of triumphing over enemies. His very stride as he stamped through the hall and into the parlour had in it the suggestion that he was planting his heel on some foe, and it was with evident elation that he announced : —

“ Well, lass, I’ve a husband for ye, so get your lips and blushes ready for him against to-morrow ! ”

“ Oh, dadda, no ! ” cried the girl, ceasing her spinet practice.

“ Oh, yes ! And no obstinacy, mind. Phil’s a good enough lad for any girl. Where’s your mother that I may tell her ? ”

“ She’s in the attic, getting out some whole cloth,” answered the girl ; and as her father left the room, she leaned forward and rested her burning cheek on the veneer of the spinet for an instant as if to cool it. But the colour deepened rather than lessened, and a moment later she rose, with her lips pressed into a straight line, and her eyes shining very brightly. “ I’ll not marry the gawk. No ! And if they insist I’ll — ” Then she paused.

“ How did Janice take it ? ” asked Mrs. Meredith, when the squire had broken his news to her.

“ Coltishly,” responded the father, “ but no blubbering this time. The filly’s getting used to the idea of a bit, and will go steady from now on.” All of which went to show how little the squire understood the nature of women, for the lack of tears should have been the most alarming fact in his daughter’s conduct.

When Phil duly put in an appearance on the following day, he was first interviewed by what Janice would have called the attorney for the prosecution, who took him to his office and insisted, much to the lover’s disgust, in hearing what he had done politically. Finally, however, this all-engrossing subject to the office-seeker was, along with Philemon’s patience, exhausted, and the squire told his fellow-candidate that the object of his desires could now be seen.

“ The lass jumped to her feet as ye rid up, and said she’d some garden matters to tend, so there’s the spot to seek her.” Then the father continued, “ Don’t shilly-shally with her, whate’er ye do, unless ye are minded to have balking and kicking for the rest of your days. I took Matilda — Mrs. Meredith — by surprise once, and before she knew I was there

I had her in my arms. And, egad ! I never let her go, plead her best, till she gave me one of my kisses back. She began to take notice from that day. "T is the way of women."

Thus stimulated, Phil entered the garden, prepared to perform most valiant deeds. Unfortunately for him, however, the bondsman had been summoned by Janice to do the digging, and his presence materially altered the situation and necessitated a merely formal greeting.

Having given some directions to Charles for continuation of the work, Janice walked to another part of the garden, apparently quite heedless of Philemon. Her swain of course followed, and the moment they were well out of hearing of the servant, Janice turned upon him and demanded : —

"Art thou gentleman enough to keep thy word?"

"I hope as how I am, Miss Janice," stuttered Phil, very much taken aback.

"Wilt give me your promise, if I tell thee something, to repeat it to no one?"

"Certain, Miss Janice, I'll tell nothin' you don't want folks ter know."

"Even dad-da and mom-my?"

"Cross my heart."

"You see that man over there?"

"Yer mean Charles?"

"Yes. He is desperately in love with me," announced the girl.

"Living jingo ! He's been a-troublin' you?"

"No. He loves me too much to persecute me, and, besides, he's a gentleman."

"Now, Miss Janice, you know as how I —"

"Am trying to marry me against my will."

"But the squire says you'll be gladsome enough a month gone ; that —"

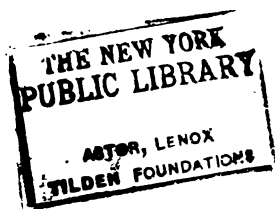
"Ugh !"

"Now please don't —"

"And what I am going to tell you and what you've given your word not to repeat is this : If you persist in trying to marry me, if you so much as try to — to — to be familiar, that moment I'll run off with him — there !"



“ ‘How did Janice take it?’ asked Mrs. Meredith.”



"You never would!"

"In an instant."

"You'd take a bondsman rather than me?"

The girl coloured, but replied, "Yes."

"I'll teach him ter have done with his cutty-eyed tricks," roared Phil, doubling up his fists, and turning, "I'll —"

"Mr. Hennion!" exclaimed the girl, her cheeks gone very white. "You gave me your word that —"

"I never gave no word 'bout not threshing the lick."

"Most certainly you did, for you — you would have to tell him before — and if you do that, I'll —"

"But, Miss Janice, you must n't disgrace — Damn him! Then Bagby was n't lyin' when he told me how there'd been talk at the tavern of his bundlin' with you."

For a moment Janice stood speechless, everything about her suggesting the shame she was enduring. "He — he never said that!" she panted more than spoke, as if she had ceased to breathe.

"I told Bagby if he said that he was lyin'; but after —"

"Mr. Hennion, do you intend to insult me as well?"

"No, no, Miss Janice. I don't believe it. 'T was a lie for certain, and I'm ashamed ter have spoke of it."

With unshed tears of mortification in her eyes Janice turned to go, every other ill forgotten in this last grief.

"Miss Janice," called Phil, "you can't go without —"

The girl faced about. "You men are all alike," she cried, interrupting. "You tease and worry and torture a girl you pretend to care for, till 't is past endurance. I hate you, and before I'll —"

"Now, Miss Janice, say you'll not run off with him. I'll — I'll try ter do as you ask, if only you —"

"So long as you — as you don't — don't bother me, I won't," promised Janice; "but the instant —"

And leaving the sentence thus broken, the girl left Philemon, and fled to her room.



XVII

IN THE NAME OF LIBERTY

THE scheme devised by Janice to keep Philemon at arm's length would hardly have succeeded for long, had not the squire been so preoccupied with the election and with the now active farm work that he paid little heed to the course of true love. Poor Phil was teased by him now and again for his "offishness;" but Janice carefully managed that their interviews were not held in the presence of her parents, and so the elders did not come to a realising sense of the condition, but really believed that the courtship was advancing with due progress to the port of matrimony.

Though this was a respite to Janice, she herself knew that it was at best the most temporary of expedients, and that the immediate press of affairs once over, her marriage with Philemon was sure to be pushed to a conclusion. Already her mother's discussions of clothes, of linen, and of furniture were constant reminders of its imminence, and the mere fact that the servants of Greenwood and the neighbourhood accepted the matter as settled, made allusions to it too frequent for Janice not to feel that her bondage was inevitable. A dozen times a day the girl would catch her breath or pale or flush over the prospect before her, frightened, as the bird in the net, not so much by the present situation, as by what the future was certain to bring to pass.

A still more serious matter was further to engross her parents' thoughts. One evening late in April, as the squire sat on the front porch resting from his day's labour, Charles, who had been sent to the village on some errand, came cantering up the road, and drew rein opposite.

"Have better care how ye ride that filly, sir," said the

squire, sharply. "I'll not have her wind broke by hard riding."

"I know enough of horses to do her no harm," answered the man, dismounting easily and gracefully; "and if I rode a bit quick, 't is because I've news that needs wings."

"What 's to do?" demanded the master, laying down the "Rivington's Royal Gazette" he had been reading.

"As I was buying the nails," replied the servant, speaking with obvious excitement, "Mr. Bissel rode up to the tavern with a letter from the Massachusetts Committee of Safety to the southward; and as 't was of some moment, while he baited, I took a copy of it." The groom held out a paper, his hand shaking a little in his excitement, and with an eager look on his face he watched the squire read the following:—

Water Town Wednesday Morning near 11 of Clock.

To all friends of american liberty, be it known, that this morning before break of day, a Brigade, consisting of about 1,000 or 1,200 Men, landed at Phipp's Farm at Cambridge and marched to Lexington, where they found a Company of our Militia in Arms, upon whom they fired without any provocation and killed 6 Men & wounded 4 others—By an express from Boston we find another Brigade are now upon their march from Boston, supposed to be about 1,000—The bearer Israel Bissel is charged to alarm the Country quite to Connecticut; and all Persons are desired to furnish him with fresh Horses, as they may be needed—I have spoken with several, who have seen the dead & wounded.

J. Palmer one of the Committee of safety.

Forwarded from Worcester April 19, 1775.

<i>Brooklyn—Thursday</i>	<i>11 o Clock</i>
<i>Norwich</i>	<i>4 o Clock</i>
<i>New London</i>	<i>7 o Clock</i>
<i>Lynne—Friday Morning</i>	<i>1 o Clock</i>
<i>Say Brook</i>	<i>4 o Clock</i>
<i>Shillingsworth</i>	<i>7 o Clock</i>
<i>E. Gillford</i>	<i>8 o Clock</i>
<i>Guilford</i>	<i>10 o Clock</i>
<i>Bradford</i>	<i>12 o Clock</i>
<i>New Haven—April 21</i>	

Recd & forwarded on certain Intelligence

Fairfield April 22d

8 o Clock

New York Committee Chamber

4 o Clock

23d April 1775 P. M.

Recd the within Acct by Express, forwd by Express to N Brunswick with directions to stop at Elizabeth Town & acquaint the Committee there with the foregoing particulars by order

J. S. Low, Chairman.

"Huh!" grunted the squire. "I said the day would come when British regulars would teach the scamps a lesson. The rapsallions are getting their bellyful, no doubt; 't is to be hoped that it will bring law and quiet once again in the land."

"'T will more likely be the match that fires the mine. You've little idea, Mr. Meredith, how strong and universal the feeling is against Great Britain."

"'T is not as strong as British bayonets, that ye may tie to, fellow."

The servant shook his head doubtfully. "'T will take a long sword to reach this far, and Gage is not the man to handle it."

"Odd's life!" swore the squire. "What know ye of Gage? If every covenant man does n't think himself the better of a major-general or a magistrate!"

"Had you ever made the voyage from England, you'd appreciate the difficulties. 'T is as big a military folly to suppose that if America holds together she can be conquered by bayonets, as 't is to suppose that she'll allow a rotten Parliament, three thousand miles away, to rule her."

"Have done with such talk! What does a rogue like ye know of Parliament, except that it passes the laws ye run from? 'T is the like of ye — debtors, runaways, and such trash — that is making all this trouble."

The servant laughed ironically. "Fools do more harm in the world than knaves."

"What mean ye by that?" demanded the squire, hotly.

"'T is as reasonable to hold the American cause bad because a few bad men take advantage of it as 't is to blame the flock

of sheep for giving the one wolf his covering. What the Whigs demand is only what the English themselves fought for under Pym and Hampden, and to-day, if the words 'Great Britain' were but inserted in the acts of Parliament of which America complains, there'd be one rebellion from Land's End to Duncansby Head."

"Didst not hear my order to cease such talk?" fumed the squire. "Go to the stable where ye belong, fellow!"

The man coloured and bit his lip in a manifest attempt to keep his temper, but he did not move, saying instead, "Mr. Meredith, wilt please tell me what you paid for my bond?"

"Why ask ye that?"

"If I could pay you the amount — and something over — wouldst be willing to release me from the covenant?"

"And why should I?" demanded the squire.

The servant hesitated, and then said in a low voice: "As a gentleman, you must have seen I'm no groom — and think how it must gall me to serve as one."

"Thou shouldst have thought of that before thou indentured, rather —"

"I know," burst out the man, "but I was crazed — was wild with — with a grief that had come to me, and knew not what I was doing."

"Fudge! No romantics. Every redemptioner would have it he is a gentleman, when he's only caught the trick by waiting on them."

"But if I buy my time you —"

"How'd come ye by the money?"

"I — I think I could get the amount."

"Ay. I doubt not ye know how money's to be got by hook or by crook! And no doubt ye want your freedom to drill more rebels to the king. Ye'll not get it from me, so there's an end on't." With which the squire rose, and stamped into the hall and then to his office.

Charles stood for a moment looking at the ground, and then raised his head so quickly that Janice, who had joined the two during the foregoing dialogue and whose eyes were upon him, had not time to look away. "Can't you persuade him to let me go, Miss Janice?" he asked appealingly.

"Why do you want your freedom?" questioned Janice, letting dignity surrender to curiosity.

"I want to get away from here — to get to a place where there's a chance for a quicker death than eating one's heart by inches."

"How beautifully he talks!" thought Janice.

"Nor will I bide here to see — to see —" went on the bondsman, excitedly, "I must run, or I shall end by — 'T will be better to let me go before I turn mad."

"'T is as good as a romance," was Janice's mental opinion. "How I wish Tibbie was here!"

"'T is no doubt a joke to you — oh! you need not have avoided me as you've done lately to show me that I was beneath you. I knew it without that. But who is this put you are going to marry?"

"Mr. Hennion is of good family," answered Janice, with spirit.

"Good family!" laughed the man, bitterly. "No doubt he is. Think you Phil Hennion is less the clout because he has a pedigree? There are hogs in Yorkshire can show better genealogies than royalty."

"'T is quite in keeping that a bond-servant should think little of blood," retorted Janice, made angry by his open contempt.

"Blood! Yes, I despise it, and so would you if you knew it as I do," exclaimed Charles, hotly, cutting the air with his whip. "*That* for all the blood in the world, unless there be honour with it," he said.

"The fox did n't want the grapes."

"'T is no case of sour grapes, as you'd know if I told you my story."

"Oh! I should monstrous like to hear it," eagerly ejaculated Janice.

The man dropped the bridle and came to the porch. "I swore it should die with me, but there's one woman in the world to whom —" he began, and then checked himself as a figure came into view on the lawn out of the growing darkness.

"Who's there?" Charles demanded.

"It's me — Joe Bagby," was the answer, as that individual



"I want to get to a place where there's a chance for a quicker death than eating one's heart out by inches."

came forward. "Is the squire home, miss?" he asked; and, receiving the reply that he was in his office, Joe volunteered the information that a wish to talk with the lord of Greenwood about the election was the motive of his call. "I want to see if we can't fix things between us."

Scarcely had he spoken when there was a sudden rush of men, who seemed to appear from nowhere, and at the same instant Joe gave a shove to the bond-servant, which, being entirely unexpected, sent him sprawling on the grass, where he was pinioned by two of the party.

"Keep your mouth shut, or I'll have to choke you," said Bagby to Janice, as she opened her mouth to scream. "Two of you stand by her and keep her quiet. Sharp now, fellows, he's in his office. Have him out, and some of you start a fire, quick."

The orders were obeyed with celerity, and as some rushed into the hall and dragged forth the squire, struggling, the scene was lighted by the blazing up of a bunch of hay, which had appeared as if by magic, and on which sticks of wood were quickly burning. Over the fire a pot, swung on a stick upheld by two men, was placed, telling a story of intention only too obvious.

"There is n't any sort of use swearing like that, squire," said Bagby. "We've got a thing or two to say, and if you won't listen to it quiet, why, we'll fill your mouth with a lump of tar, to give you something to chew on while we say it. Cussing did n't prevent your being a babe in the wood, and it won't prevent our giving you a bishop's coat; so if you don't want it, have done, and listen to what we have to propose."

"Well?" demanded the squire.

"We've stood your conduct just as long as it was possible, squire," went on Bagby, "and been forbearing, hoping you'd mend your ways. But it's no use, and so we've come up this evening to give you a last chance to put yourself right, for we're a peace-loving, law-abiding lot, and don't want to use nothing but moral suasion, as the parson puts it, unless you make us."

"That's it. Give it to him, Joe," said some one, approvingly.

"Now that the regulars of old Guelph have begun slaughtering the sons of liberty, we have decided to put an end to snakes in the grass, and so you can come to the face-about, or you can have a coat of tar and a ride on a rail out of the county. And what's more, when you're once out, you're to stay out, mind. Which is your choice?"

"What do you want me to do?" demanded the squire, sullenly.

"First off, we're tired of your brag that tea's drunk on your table. You're to give us all you've got, and you're not to get any new, whether 'tis East India or smuggled."

"I agree to that."

"Secondly," went on Bagby, in a sing-song voice, much as if he was reading a series of resolutions, "you're to sign the Congress Association, and live up to it."

The squire looked to right and left, as if considering some outlet; but there were men all about him, and after a pause he merely nodded his head.

"You're getting mighty reasonable, squire," remarked Bagby, with a grin. "Lastly, we don't want to be represented in Assembly by such a king's man, and so you're to decline a poll."

"If the electors don't want me, let them say so at the election."

"Some of your tenants are 'feared to vote against you, and we intend that this election shall be unanimous for the friends of liberty. Will you decline a poll?"

"Now damn me if —" began the squire.

"Come, come, squire," interrupted an elderly man. "Yer've stud no chance of election from the fust, so what's the use of stickling?"

"I wash my hands of ye," roared the squire. "Have whom ye want for what ye want. I've done with serving a lot of ingrates. Ye can come to me in the future on your knees, but ye'll not get me to —"

"That's just what we wants," broke in Joe. "If you'd always been so open to public opinion, we'd have had no cause for complaint against you. And now, squire, since a united land is what we wants, while your daughter gets

The LIBERTY SONG. In Freedom we're born, &c.



Come join hand in hand here A - - - - - call, And round your bold hearts at fair Li - ber - ty's call. No tyrannous a - - - - - shall sup -



press your just claim. Or vain with disonour A - - - - - name, In Free - dom we're born add in Free - dom we're



live, Our - - - - - are res - - - - - dy, Steady, Friends, Steady. Not as Slaves, but as Free men are we - - - - - any we'll give

Our worthy Forefathers - Let's give them a cheer
To Climates unknown did courageously steer;
Thro' Oceans, to desert, for freedom they came,
And dying bequeath'd us their freedom and fame.
In Freedom we're born &c.
Their generous bosoms all dangers despis'd,
So highly, so wisely, their Birkenhead they priz'd,
We'll keep what they gave, we will proudly keep
Nor frustrate their toils on the land and the deep.
In Freedom we're born, &c.
The Tree their own hands had to liberty rear'd;
The - - - - - hold strong and rever'd;

With transport they cry'd, "now our wishes we gain"
For our children shall gather the fruits of our pain"
In Freedom we're born &c.
Swarms of placemen and pensioners soon will ap -
pear All ages shall speak with amaze and applause.
Of the courage we'll shew in support of our laws
To die we can bear - - - - - but to serve we disdain,
For fame is to Freedom more dreadful than pain
In Freedom we're born, &c.
This bumper I crown for our Sovereign's health,
And this for Britannia's glory and wealth;
That wealth and that glory immortal may be,
If she is but just - - - - - and if we are but Free
In Freedom we're born &c.

First American National Song.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATION

the tea and a pen to sign the Association, do the thing up handsome by singing us the liberty song."

"Burn me if I will," cried the owner of Greenwood, like many another yielding big points without much to-do, but obstinate over the small ones.

"Is that tar about melted?" inquired Bagby.

"Jest the right consistency, Joe," responded one of the pole-holders.

"Better sing it, squire," advised Bagby. "We know you're not much at a song, but the sentiments is what we like."

Once again the beset man looked to right and left, rage and mortification united. Then, with a remark below his breath, he sang in a very tuneless bass, that wandered at will between flat and sharp, with not a little falsetto: —

"Come join Hand in Hand, brave Americans all,
And rouse your bold Hearts at fair Liberty's Call;
No tyrannous Acts shall suppress your just Claim
Or stain with Dishonour America's Name —
In Freedom we're born and in Freedom we'll live.
Our Purses are ready —
Steady, Friends, Steady —
Not as Slaves, but as Freemen our Money we'll give."

"That's enough!" remarked the ringleader. "Now, Watson, let the squire sign that broadside. Take the pot off, boys, and dump the tea on the fire. Good-evening, squire, and sweet dreams to you; I hope 't will be long before you make us walk eight miles again. Fall in, Invincibles. You've struck your first blow for freedom."

For a moment the steady tramp of the departing men was all that broke the stillness of the night; but as they marched they fell into song, and there came drifting back to the trio standing silent about the porch the air of "Hearts of Oak," and the words: —

"Then join Hand in Hand, brave Americans all!
To be free is to live, to be Slaves is to fall;
Has the Land such a Dastard, as scorns not a Lord,
Who dreads not a Fetter much more than a Sword?
In Freedom we're born, and, like Sons of the Brave,
We'll never surrender,
But swear to defend her,
And scorn to survive, if unable to save."



XVIII

FIGUREHEADS AND LEADERS

THE squire's mood in the next few days was anything but genial, and his family, his servants, his farmhands, his tenants, and in fact all whom he encountered, received a share of his spleen.

His ill-nature was not a little increased by hearing indirectly, through his overseer, that it was the elder Hennion who had planned the surprise party; and in revenge Mr. Meredith set about the scheme, already hinted at, of buying assignments of the mortgages on Boxley. For this purpose he announced his intention of journeying to New York, and ordered Philemon to be his travelling companion that he might have the advantage of his knowledge of the holders of the elder Hennion's bonds. The would-be son-in-law at first objected to being made a cat's-paw, but the squire was obstinate, and after a night upon it, Phil acceded. No other difficulty was found in the attainment of Mr. Meredith's purpose, the money-lenders in New York being only too glad, in the growing insecurity and general suspension of law, to turn their investments into cash. It was a task of some weeks to gather them all in, but it was one of the keenest enjoyment to the squire, who each evening, over his mulled wine in the King's Arms Tavern, pictured and repictured the moment of triumph, when, with the growing bundle of mortgages completed, he should ride to Boxley and inform its occupant that he wished them paid.

"We 'll show the old fox that he's got a ferret, not a goose, to deal with," he said a dozen times to Phil, — a speech which always made the latter look very uneasy, as if his conscience were pricking.

This absence of father and lover gave Janice a really restful breathing space, and it was the least eventful time the girl had



“’Tis good luck they both is called George.”

known since the advent of the bondsman nearly a year before. Even he almost dropped out of the girl's life, for the farm-work was now at its highest point of activity, and he was little about house or stable. Furthermore, though twenty thousand minutemen and volunteers were gathered before Boston, though the thirteen colonies were aflame with war preparations, and though the Continental Congress was voting a declaration on taking up arms and appointing a general, nothing but vague report of all this reached Greenwood.

In Brunswick, however, Dame Rumour was more precise, and one afternoon as the bondsman rode into the town, with some horses that needed shoeing, he was hailed by the tavern-keeper.

"Say! Folks tells that yer know how tew paint a bit?" And, when Charles nodded, he continued: "Waal, we've hearn word that the Congress has appinted a feller named George Washington fer ginral, who's goin' tew come through here tew-morrer on his way tew Boston, an' I want tew git that ere name painted out and his'n put in its place. Are yer up tew it, and what 'ud the job tax me?" As the publican spoke he pointed at the lettering below the weather-beaten portrait of George the Third, which served as the signboard of the tavern.

"Get me some colours, and bide till I leave these horses at the smith's, and I'll do it for nothing," said Charles, smiling; and ten minutes later, sitting on a barrel set in a cart, he was doing his share toward the obliteration of kingship and the substitution of a comparatively unknown hero.

"'T is good luck that they both is called George," remarked the tavern-keeper; "fer yer've only got tew paint out the 'King' an' put in a 'Gen.' in the first part, which saves trouble right tew begin on."

Charles smilingly adopted the suggestion, and then measured off "the III." "'T is a long name to get into such space," he said.

"Scant it is," assented the publican. "I'll tell yer what. Jist leave the 'the' an' paint in 'good' after it. That'll make it read slick." Pleased with this solution of the difficulty, the hotel-keeper retired to the "public," with a part-

ing invitation to the painter to drink something for his trouble.

While Charles was doing the additional work, he was interrupted by a roar of laughter, and, twisting about on his barrel, he found a group of horsemen, who had come across the green and drawn rein just behind him, looking at the newly lettered sign. From the one of the three who rode first came the burst of laughter—a man of medium size and thinly built, perhaps fifty years of age, with a nose so out of proportion to his face, in its size and heaviness, that it came near enough to caricature to practically submerge all his other features. The second man was evidently trying not to smile, and as Charles glanced at him, he found him looking at the third of the trio, as if to ascertain his mood. This last, a man of extreme tallness, and in appearance by far the youngest of the group—for he looked not over thirty at most—was scrutinising the signboard gravely, but his eyes had a gleam of merriment in them, which neutralised the set firmness of the mouth. All the party were in uniform, save for a couple of servants in livery, and all were well mounted.

“Haw, haw, haw!” laughed the noisy one. “Pray God mine host be not as chary with his spit as he is with his paint or ’t will be lean entertainment.”

“I said ’t was best to make a push for ’t to Amboy,” remarked the second.

“Nay, gentlemen,” responded the third, smiling pleasantly. “A man so prudent and economical must keep a good ordinary. Better bide here for dinner and kill a warm afternoon, and then push on to Amboy, in the cool of the evening, with rested cattle.”

“Within there!” shouted the noisy rider, “hast dinner and bait for a dozen travellers?”

The call brought the publican to the door, and at first he gasped a startled “By Jingo!” Then he jerked his cap off, and ducked very low, saying: “’T was said, yer — yer — Lordship, that yer’d not come till the morrow. But if yer’ll honour my tavern, yer shall have the bestest in the house.” He kept bowing between every word to the man with the big nose.

“Then here we tarry for dinner,” said the young-looking

man, gracefully swinging himself out of the saddle, a proceeding imitated by all the riders. "Take good heed of the horses, Bill," he said, as a coloured servant came forward. "Wash Blueskin's nose and let him cool somewhat before watering him." He turned toward the door of the tavern, and this bringing Charles into vision again, he looked up at the painter to find himself being studied with so intent a gaze that he halted and returned the man's stare.

"Art struck of a heap by the resemblance?" demanded the noisy officer.

"Go in, gentlemen," replied the tall one. "Well, my man," he continued to Charles, "ye change figureheads easily."

"Ay, 't is easier to get new figureheads than 't is to be true to old ones."

A grave, almost stern look came into the officer's face, making it at once that of an older man. "Then ye think the old order best?" he asked, scanning the man with his steady blue eyes.

The bondsman put his hand on the signboard. "'T is safest to stick to an old figurehead until one can find a true leader," he answered.

"And think you he is one?" demanded the officer, pointing at the signboard.

Charles laughed and laid a finger on the chin of royalty. "No man with so little of that was ever a leader," he asserted. He reached down and picked up a different pot of paint from the one he had been using, dipped his brush in it, and with one sweep over the lower part of the face cleverly produced a chin of character. Then he took another colour and gave three or four deft touches to the lips, transforming the expressionless mouth into a larger one, but giving to it both strength and expression. "There is a beginning of a leader, I think," he said.

"Thou art quick with thy brush and quick with thy eyes," replied the man, smiling slightly and starting to go. In the doorway he turned and said with a sudden gravity, quite as much to himself as to the bondsman: "Please God that thou be as true in opinion."

Left alone, the bondsman once more took his brush and broadened and strengthened the nose and forehead. Just as he had completed these, the tavern-keeper came bustling out of the door. "Wilt seek Joe Bagby an' tell him tew git the Invincibles tewgether?" he cried. "He intended tew review 'em tew-morrer fer the ginral, an' their Lordships says they'll see 'em go through — Why, strap me, man, what hast thou been at?"

"I've been making it a better portrait of the general than it ever was of the king."

"But yer've drawn the wrong man!" exclaimed the publican. "That quiet young man is not him. 'Tis the heavy-nosed man is his Excellency."

"Nonsense!" retorted the bondsman. "That loud-voiced fellow is Leftenant-Colonel Lee, a half-pay officer. Many and many's the time I've seen him — and if I had n't, I'd have known the other for the general in a hundred."

"I tell yer yer're wrong," moaned the hotel-keeper. "Any one can see he's a ginral, an' 'tis he gives all the orders fer victuals an' grog."

Charles laughed as he descended from the barrel and the cart. "'Tis ever the worst wheel in the cart which makes the most noise," he said, and walked away.

Two hours later the Invincibles were bunched upon the green. As the diners issued from the inn, Bagby gave an order. With some slight confusion the company fell in, and two more orders brought their guns to "present arms."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Lee. "Here are some yokels who for once don't hold their guns as if they were hoes."

Joe, fairly swelling with the pride of the moment, came strutting forward. When he was within ten feet of the officers he took off his hat and bowed very low. "The Invincibles is ready to be put through their paces, your honour," he announced.

"Damme!" sneered Lee, below his breath. "Here's a mohair in command who does n't so much as know the salute."

The tall officer, despite his six feet and three inches of height, swung himself lightly into the saddle without using a stirrup, and rode forward.

"Proceed with the review, sir," he said to Joe.

"Yes, sir — that is, I mean — your honour," replied Joe ; and, turning, he roared out, "Get ready to go on, fellows. Attention ! Dress !"

Instant disorder was visible in the ranks, some doing one thing, and some another, while a man stepped forward three or four steps and shouted : "Yer fergot ter git the muskets back ter the first persition, Joe."

"Get into line, durn you !" shouted Joe ; "an' I'll have something to say to you later, Zerubbabel Buntling."

"O Lord !" muttered Lee to the other officers, most of whom were laughing. "And they expect us to beat regulars with such !"

"Attention !" once more called Joe. "To the right face — no — I mean, shoulder firelocks first off. Now to the left face." But by this time he was so confused that his voice sank as he spoke the last words, and so some faced right and some left ; while altercations at once arose in the ranks that broke the alignment into a number of disputing groups and set the captain to swearing.

"Come," shouted one soldier, "cut it, Joe, an' let Charles take yer place. Yer only mixes us up."

The suggestion was greeted by numerous, if various, assenting opinions from the ranks, and without so much as waiting to hear Bagby's reply, Charles sprang forward. Giving the salute to the mounted officers, he wheeled about, and, with two orders, had the lines in formation, after which the manoeuvres were gone through quickly and comparatively smoothly.

The reviewing officer had not laughed during the confusion, watching it with a sternly anxious face, but as the drill proceeded this look changed, and when the parade was finished, he rode forward and saluted the Invincibles. "Gentlemen," he said, "if you but conduct yourselves with the same steadiness in the face of the enemy as you have this afternoon, your country will have little to ask of you and much to owe." He turned to Joe, standing shamefaced at one side, and continued : "You are to be complimented on your company, sir. 'T is far and away the best I have seen since I left Virginia."

"And that is n't all, your honour," replied Joe, his face brightening and his self-importance evidently restored. "We are a forehanded lot, and we've got twenty half-barrels of powder laid in against trouble."

After a few more words with Bagby, which put a pleased smile on his face, the officer wheeled his horse. "Well, gentlemen, we'll proceed," he called to the group; and, as they were mounting, he rode to where Charles stood. "You have served?" he said.

Charles, with the old sullen look upon his face, saluted, and replied bitterly: "Yes, general, and would give an eye to be in the ranks again."

The general looked at him steadily. "If ye served in the ranks, how comes it that ye give the officer's salute?" he asked.

Charles flushed, but met the scrutinising eye to eye, as he answered: "None know it here, but I held his Majesty's commission for seven years."

"You look o'er young to have done that," said the general.

"I was made a cornet at twelve."

"How comes it that you are here?"

"My own folly," muttered the man.

"'T is a pity thou'rt indentured, for we have crying need of trained men. But do what you can hereabouts, since you are not free to join us."

"I will, general," said Charles, eagerly, and, as the officer wheeled his horse, he once more saluted. Then as the travellers rode toward the bridge, the bondsman walked over and looked up at his crude likeness of the general.

"Yer wuz right," remarked the innkeeper. "The young-lookin' feller wuz Ginral Washington."

"Ay," exclaimed the man; "and, mark me, if a face goes for aught, he's general enough to beat Gage—and that—" the man paused, and then added: "that sluggard Howe. And would to God I could help in it!"



XIX

SPIES AND COUNTER-SPIES

IT was the middle of July when the squire and Phil returned from New York, bringing with them much news of the war preparations, of Washington's passing through the city, and of the bloody battle of Bunker Hill. Of far more importance, however, to the ladies of Greenwood, were two pieces of information which their lord and master promptly announced. First, that he wished the marriage to take place speedily, and second, that at New York he had met Mr. Evatt, just landed from a South Carolina ship, and intending, as soon as some matter of business was completed, to repeat his former visit to Greenwood, — an intention that the squire had heartily indorsed by the warmest of invitations. Both brought the colour to the cheeks of Janice, but had the parents been watchful, they would have noted that the second bit of news produced the higher tint.

Although Phil was still on apparently good terms with his father, he was, from the time of his return, much at Greenwood ; and, his simple nature being quite incapable of deceit, Janice very quickly perceived that his chief motive was not so much the lover's desire to be near, as it was to keep watch of her. Had the fellow deliberately planned to irritate the girl, he could have hit upon nothing more certain to enrage her, and a week had barely elapsed when matters reached a crisis.

Janice, who, it must be confessed, took pleasure in deliberately arousing the suspicion of Philemon, and thus forcing him to reveal how closely he spied upon her, one evening, as they rose from the supper-table, slipped out of the window and walked toward the stable. Her swain was prompt in pursuit ; and she, quite conscious of this, stepped quickly to one side

as she passed through the last opening in the box, and stood half-buried in the hedge. Ignorant of her proximity, Philemon came quickly through the hedge, and was promptly made aware of it by her hot words.

"'Tis past endurance. I'll not be spied on so."

"I — I — Why, Janice, you know how I likes ter be with you," falteringly explained Hennion.

"Spy, spy, spy — nothing but spy!" rebuked Janice; "I can't so much as — as go to pick a flower but you are hiding behind a bush."

"'Deed, Janice, you're not fairsome ter me. After you sayin' what you did about that rake-helly bondsman, 't is only human ter —"

"To treat me as if I was a slave. Why, Peg has more freedom than I have. If you — I'm going to the stable — to see Charles — and if you dare to follow me, I'll —" The girl walked away and disappeared through the doorway, leaving Philemon standing by the box, the picture of indecision and anxiety. "He does n't know that Charles was sent to the village," thought Janice, laughing merrily to herself as she went to a stall, and pulling the horse's head down put her cheek against it. "Oh, Joggles dear," she sighed, "they are all against me but you." She went from one horse to another, giving each a word and a caress. Then she stole back to the door and peeked through the crack, to find that her shadow had disappeared; this ascertained, she went and sat down on the hay. "If he tortures me, I'll torture him," was her thought.

Janice waited thus for but a few minutes, when she heard the rapid trot of a horse, which came to a halt at the stable door. As that sound ceased, the voice of Charles broke the silence, saying, "You stall the horse, while I see the squire;" and, in obedience to this direction, some one led Daisy into the stable. The gloom of nightfall made the interior too dark for the girl to recognise the man, and, not wishing it to be known that she was there, she sat quiet.

For a good ten minutes the man waited, whistling softly the while, before Charles returned.

"Waal, what luck?" asked the stranger ere Charles had come through the doorway.

"Luck!" growled the bondsman. "The devil's own, as mine always is, curse it!"

"From which I calkerlate that old Meredith wuz obstinate and wud n't set yer free."

"Not he, plead my best. But that's the last I ask of him; and 't would have served him as well to let me go, for go I will."

"You 'll go off without —"

"I will."

"Yer know what it means if brought back?"

"Double the time. Well, treble it, and still I 'll do it. I gave my word I 'd help, and the general shall have the powder, if for nothing else than to spite that dirty coward Bagby, though I serve thrice five years for' t. Tell the lads I 'll lead them, and if they 'll meet me at Drigg's barn to-morrow evening at ten we 'll scheme out how to do it."

Without further parley the stranger walked away, and no sooner had the crunch of his boots ceased than Janice came forward.

Charles gave a startled exclamation as she appeared, and caught the girl roughly by the wrist. "Who's this?" he exclaimed.

"You hurt," complained Janice.

The bondsman relaxed but not released his hold at the sound of her voice. "You 've heard all I said?" he demanded.

"Yes. I — I did n't like to come out while the man was here."

"And you 'll tell your father?"

"No," denied the girl. "I did n't want to listen by stealth, but since I did, I 'm no tale-bearer."

Raising the hand he held by the wrist, Charles kissed it. "I should have known you were no eavesdropper, Miss Janice," he said, releasing his hold.

"But — Oh, what is it you are going to do?" asked Janice.

"I have your word that it goes no further?"

"Yes."

"A secret letter came to the Brunswick Committee yesternorn from General Washington, saying that it had just been discovered that their powder account was a lie, and that there

were less than ten rounds to each man in stock. He knew by some means of what is here, and he begged the committee to send it to him; for if the British attacked him in his present plight, 't would be fatal. And yet what think you the committee did?"

"They asked you to take it to him?"

"Not they, the — Ah! there's no words to fit them. Old Hennion, mean hunks that he is, wanted them to write and offer to sell it at double what had been paid for 't, while Bagby would n't part with it on any terms, because he said 't was needed by the 'Invincibles' to defend the town. The two voted down Parson McClave, who declared that Brunswick should be laid in ashes rather than that Washington should not be helped. Ah, Miss Janice, that's a man for these times."

"Then what dost intend?"

"The parson came to me to counsel what was best, and 'tween us we concocted a plan to outwit the time-servers. There are plenty of fellows of spirit in the 'Invincibles,' and 't is our scheme to steal the powder some night, put it on a sloop, and be to sea before daylight."

"How monstrous exciting!" exclaimed Janice, her eyes sparkling. "And you —"

"I'll lead them. I'm desperate enough to do anything that has risk. There's real fighting there, if the accounts speak true, and perhaps a bullet will cancel both my shame and my bond — ay, and my — my love for you. For I love you, Miss Janice, love you more —"

Though taken very much by surprise, Janice drew herself up proudly, and interrupted: "You forget —" she began.

"Of course I forget!" broke in the groom. "What would love be worth if it did n't forget everything but itself? I forget I'm a bond-servant, you'd say. So I should if I were a king. But you are too heartless to know what love is," he ended bitterly.

"'T is not so," denied Janice, angrily; "but I'll love no redemptioner, though he be as good-looking and good-tempered as you are ill-natured and ugly."

"And who are you," demanded the man, passionately, "to

take such mighty airs? A daughter of a nobody, dubbed Esquire because he is the biggest bubble in a pint pot."

"I shall not stay here to be insulted," cried Janice, moving away. But in the doorway her exasperation got the better of her dignity, and she faced about and said: "You evidently don't know that my great-grandfather was Edward Byllynge."

The man laughed contemptuously. "Why, you little ninny," he retorted, "my great-grandfather was king of England!"

Janice caught hold of the lintel, and stood as if transfixed for a moment, even the mortifying epithet of the groom forgotten in her amazement. "A likely tale!" she ejaculated finally when the first mute surprise was conquered.

The bond-servant had gained control of himself in the pause, for he quietly rejoined: "'Tis true enough, though nothing to make boast of, save to those who set great store by grandfathers." Then, in a sadder tone, he added: "'T was a foolish brag I never thought to make, for it carries more shame than honour, and 'tis therefore best forgotten. Moreover, I ask your pardon for saying what else I did; 't was my tongue and not my heart which spoke."

The insult being atoned, Janice came back. "You said you would tell me your history."

"But then — that was when I hoped — a fool I was." The redeptioner paused, and then took a quick step toward Janice with an eager look on his face and his hand outstretched. "There is but one woman in the world can gain the right to hear my sorry tale. May I tell it to you?"

Young and inexperienced as the girl was, the implication of the question was too obvious for her to miss, and she replied, "No."

The man dropped his arm and stood quietly for a moment, then gave a short, abrupt laugh. "Either 'tis my lot to worship clay idols," he said, "or no woman is worth loving."

"Small blame to them for not loving you," rejoined Janice.

"Electing to marry a put like Hennion! There's a husband of whom to be proud."

"At least he is no indentured servant," retorted the girl, in her irritation, walking away from the stable. Once through the garden and in sight of the house, she halted, her atten-

tion attracted by some to-do about the porch. Coming swiftly forward, it was to discover the squire there, candle in hand, to light the dismounting of a horseman, and that no less than Mr. Evatt.

"A welcome to ye," the host was saying. "Peg, tell Charles to come and take this horse. Get ye into the house, man; I'll hold him. Ah! Jan. Take Mr. Evatt in, lass, and tell your mother we've a visitor."

Janice, feeling strangely shy, led the way to the parlour, and when her mother, after the briefest of greetings, promptly bustled off to order a glass of wine and to inspect the best lodging-room — as guest chambers were then termed — her embarrassment was sufficient to bring the blood glowing into her cheeks, while, not daring so much as to meet Evatt's eye, she hung her head and had much ado to keep from trembling.

Evatt stood with a broad smile on his face and unconcealed pleasure in his eyes, for in truth the girl made a picture to charm any man; and not till Janice lifted her eyes, and shot a furtive look at him, did he move toward her. He took her hand and whispered: "For nine months I've thought me of those lips and wondered when I should have taste of them. Quickly, or thy father will —"

"You must n't!" gasped Janice, hanging her head more than ever. "I'm to marry Philemon."

"Tush!" exclaimed the man. "I heard that tarradiddle in York City. Why, thou'rt promised to me, dost not remember, and I'll not release thee, that I bind to. Wouldst rather have that clout than me, Janice?"

Very falteringly and still with downcast face the girl murmured, "No."

"Then I'll save ye from him, mark my word. Come, up with your lips, and give me a kiss for the promise. What! still frightened? 'Tis nothing so terrible. A court lady would have had a dozen kisses in the time I've pleaded. And ye are no mere country hoyden, without manners or —"

Already Janice was raising her head, the possibility of seeming countrified being worse even than a man's caress; but her intended submission and Evatt's speech were both



“Janice led the way into the parlour.”

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interrupted by the clump of boots in the hall, and the pair had barely time to assume less tell-tale attitudes when the squire and Phil were standing in the doorway.

"Friend Evatt," ejaculated Mr. Meredith, "come to my office at once. I've a matter needing your advice. Lass, tell your mother to send us the Madeira and rum, with some hot water, but let us not be disturbed."

Evatt made a grimace as he followed, and threw himself into a chair with a suggestion of irritation.

"This lad, for a reason he won't tell," began the squire, as he closed the door, "has kept eye on a bondsman of mine, and this evening, as luck would have it, he stood upon a barrel, by one of the stable windows, and overheard a pretty story the fellow told to some one whom Phil could n't see. Tell it o'er, lad, as ye told it me."

Hennion, thus admonished, retold the story of the powder, as the bond-servant had related it to Janice. But two omissions he made: the first being a failure to mention the connection of his father with the matter, and the second the presence of Janice in the stable.

"Here's news indeed!" exclaimed Evatt.

"Ay. But what to do with it is the question."

"Do! Why, get word of it to Howe as quick as may be, so that he may take advantage of their plight. We must send him a letter."

"'T is easier said than done. Boston is encompassed, and no man can get through the lines."

"I have it. The 'Asia' frigate, with her tender, lies in the lower bay at New York; the latter can be sent round with a letter to Boston. And ye shall bear it, lad," added Evatt, turning to Phil.

"'T ain't no wish of mine," ejaculated Philemon.

"There is no one else we can trust. 'T will be but a month's affair, at worst."

"But I don't care ter go," dissented Hennion. "I want ter get married ter Miss Janice right off, an' not—"

"Come, squire, tell the fellow he must n't shirk his duty to his king. He can marry your daughter any time, but now's the moment to do a service to his country. Why, man, if it

ends this rebellion, as it seems like to, they 'll give ye a title — and ye, too, squire, I doubt not."

"He speaks true, Phil. Here 's a chance, indeed. Put the girl out of thy head for a time, and think a man's thoughts."

"Ay," cried Evatt. "Don't prove the old saying :

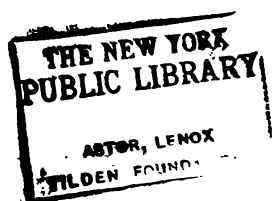
'He who sighs for a glass without G,
Take away L and that is he.'"

It took much more urging to get Phil to yield, but finally, on a promise of the master of Greenwood that he should wed so soon as he returned, he gave a half-hearted consent. Over the rum a letter to Sir William Howe was written by Evatt, and he and Phil arranged to be up and away betimes in the morning.

"That gets him well out of the way," remarked Evatt, as in his bedroom he stripped off his clothes. "Now to be as successful with Miss Blushing Innocence."



“ It took much more urging to get Phil to yield.”





XX

THE LOGIC OF HONOURED PARENTS AND DUTIFUL CHILDREN

PHILEMON and Evatt were in the saddle by five the next morning and a little more than an hour later held consultation with Bagby. Everything except Phil's intended mission was quickly told him.

"Jingo!" he remarked, and then whistled. "Why, 't is stealing? Isn't there to be no law in the land? When do they plot to rob us?"

"They meet this evenin' ter scheme it, an' a body can't tell when they 'll act."

"'T won't likely be to-night, but I'll keep guard myself, all the same, and some of the Invincibles shall watch every night."

This warning given, and a bite taken at the tavern by way of breakfast, the ride to Amboy was made in quick time. Here a boat was secured, and the two were rowed off to the "Asia" as she lay inside the Hook. Evatt had a long conference with her captain in his cabin, and apparently won consent to his plan; for when he returned on deck, a cutter was cleared away, and Phil was told it would put him on the tender which was to carry him to Boston. With many a longing glance at the shore, he bade good-by to Evatt, who cheered him by predictions of reward and speedy return.

Philemon gone, Evatt remained a short time in conference with the chaplain of the man-of-war, and then returned to Amboy. Once more taking horse, he set off on his return to Greenwood, arriving there in the heat of the afternoon. He was forced, by the absence of all the working force in the hayfield, to stable his horse himself, and then he walked toward what he had already observed from the saddle, — Janice, seated upon a garden bench under a poplar on the lawn, making

artificial flowers. Let it be acknowledged that until the appearance of Evatt the girl had worked languidly, and had allowed long pauses of idleness while she meditated, but with his advent she became the embodiment of industry.

"Odd's life!" the man ejaculated as he sat down beside the worker. "'Twixt love's heat and an August sun, your lover, Janice, has come nigh to dissolving."

Janice, with hands that shook, essayed to snip out a rose petal which her own cheeks matched in tint.

Evatt removed first his hat and then his wig, that he might mop his head. Having replaced the hirsute ornament, he continued: "And thy father is as hot for thy marriage with that yokel. He set the day yestere'en."

"When?" demanded the girl, looking up anxiously.

"What say ye to this day week?"

"Oh!" cried Janice. "Was ever maid born under such a ha'penny planet?"

"Don't make outcry 'gainst your star when it has sent ye a lover in the nick of time, ready to save ye from the bumpkin."

Janice took a shy come-and-go glance at him and said: "You mean —"

"What say ye to an elopement?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl, meeting Evatt's gaze eagerly. "'Twould be monstrous delightful to be run off with, of course; but —"

"But what?"

"Well — I — Mommy told me that in the province no maid could be lawfully wed without her parents' consent."

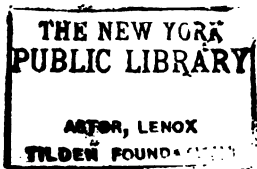
"True," assented the tempter, "if she wed where the colony law holds good. But we'll get round that by having the knot tied on royal ground."

"Not in England?" said the girl, drawing back a little.

"Think ye I'd treat the lass I love like that?" responded Evatt, reproachfully. "Nay. A friend of mine is chaplain on the 'Asia' man-of-war, and he'll make no bones about helping us. And as the king's flag and broad arrow puts the ship out of the colony jurisdiction, 'twill make the thing legal despite the law."



“Cheered him by predictions of reward and speedy return.”



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"How romantic!" exclaimed Janice. "To think of making a stolen match, and of being wed on a king's ship!"

"Now dost want to rail at thy star?"

"'Tis great good fortune," ecstatically sighed the girl. "Think you 't would be right?"

"Would I ask it if 't were not?" rejoined Evatt, heartily.

"But dad-da and mom-my—" began the falterer.

"Will be pleased enough when the job's done. Think ye, if they were n't bound they'd not rather have a titled son-in-law than that gawk?"

"A what?" cried Janice.

"Thou dost not know thy lover's true name, Janice. 'Tis John Ombrey, Lord Clowes, who sits beside thee."

Janice sprang to her feet. "And I've spoke to you as if you were just—just a man," she cried in a horrified voice. "'T was not fair so to beguile me!"

Evatt looked at the ground to hide the smile he could not suppress. "'T was done for the king, Janice," he said. "And 't is all the more romantic that I've won ye without your knowing. Sit down again; if 't were not in view of the house I should be kneeling to ye."

Janice sank back on the garden seat. "I can't believe it yet!" she gasped breathlessly. "I knew of course thou wast a court gentleman, but—"

"And now I suppose ye'll send me packing and wed the yokel?" suggested the lover.

"Oh, no!" cried Janice. "If you—if you really—" the girl gave a glance at the man, coloured to the temples, and, springing to her feet, fled toward the house. She did not stop till she reached her room, where she flung herself on the bed and buried her cheeks in the pillow. Thus she lay for some time, then rose, looked at herself in the mirror, and finding her hair sadly disordered, she set about the task of doing it over. "'T is beyond belief!" she murmured. "I must be very beautiful!" She paused in her task, and studied her own face. "Now I know why he always makes me feel so uncomfortable—and afraid—and—and gawky. 'T is because he is a lord. Sometimes he does look at me as if—as if he were hungry—ugh! It frights me. But he must know what's the mode

'Lady Janice Clowes.' 'Tis a pity the title is not prettier. Whatever will Tibbie say when she hears!'

It was a little after ten that evening when the squire and Evatt parted for the night in the upper hall, the former being, as usual, not tipsy, but in a jovial mood toward all things; and as this attitude is conducive to sleep, his snores were ere long reverberating to all waking ears. One pair of these were so keenly alive to every noise that not the chirp of a cricket escaped them, and from time to time their owner started at the smallest sound. Owing to this attention, they heard presently the creak of the stairs, the soft opening of the front door, and even the swish of feet on the grass. Then, though the ears fairly strained to catch the least noise, came a silence, save for the squire's trumpeting, for what seemed to the girl a period fairly interminable.

Finally the rustling of the grass told of the return of the prowler, and as the girl heard it she once more began trembling. "Oh!" she moaned. "If only I had n't—if only he'd go away!" She rose from the bed, and stole to the window.

"Mr. Evatt, I'm so frightened, I don't dare," she whispered to the figure standing below. "Wait till to-morrow night!"

"Nonsense!" said the man, so loudly that Janice was more scared than ever. "I told ye it must be to-night. Come down quickly."

"Oh, please!" moaned Janice.

"Dost want to be the wife of that gawk?" demanded Evatt, impatiently.

Though he did not know it, the girl vacillated. "At least I'm not frightened of Phil," was her thought.

"Well," called the man more loudly, "art going to keep me here all night?"

"Hush!" whispered Janice. "Thee'll wake—"

"Belike I will," he retorted irritably. "And if they ask me what's in the wind, they shall have the truth. Odd's life! I'm not a man to be fooled by a chit of a girl."

"Oh, hush!" again she begged, more frightened at the prospect of her parents knowing than by any other possibility. "I'll come if you'll only be quiet."

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She took a small bundle, hurriedly stole downstairs, and passed out of the house.

"Now ye've come to your senses," said the man. "Give me the bundle and your hand," he continued, and set out at a rapid pace across the lawn, having almost to drag the girl, her feet carried her so unwillingly. "Over with ye," he ordered, as they reached the stile at the corner, and when Janice descended she found two horses hitched to the fence and felt a little comforted by the mere presence of Daisy. She was quickly mounted, and they set off, the girl so helpless in her fright that Evatt had to hold her horse's bridle as well as his own.

"Burn it!" exclaimed Evatt, presently, "art never going to end thy weeping?"

"If you would only have waited till —" sobbed Janice.

"'Twas no time for shilly-shallying," interrupted the man. "Dost not see that we had to take to-night, when the groom was gone, for there 'd have been no getting the horses with him sleeping in the stable?"

"What if we meet him returning?" cried the girl, her voice shaking.

"'T would little matter. Think ye he could catch us afoot?"

"But he could tell dad-da."

"And by that time we shall be two-thirds of the way to Amboy. 'T is but a twenty miles, and we should be there by three. Then if we meet no delay in getting a boat, we shall be on the 'Asia' near seven. By eight the chaplain will have made us twain one."

"Oh!" moaned the girl, "what ever will dad-da say?"

As this was a question no one could answer, a silence ensued, which lasted until they rode into Brunswick. Guiding the horses upon the green, to reduce the beat of their hoofs to a minimum, Evatt turned off the grass at the river road and headed toward the bridge across the Raritan. As they approached, a noise of some kind arrested Evatt's attention, and he was just checking the horses when a voice cried: —

"Stand!"

Janice gave a startled cry which instantly set a dog barking.

"Keep silence!" again ordered the unseen man.

Evatt, after an oath below his breath, demanded, "By what right do ye stop us, whoever ye are?"

"By the right of powder and ball," remarked the voice, drily.

Again the dog barked, and both Evatt and the unseen man swore. "Curse the beast!" said the latter. "Hist, Charles! Call the dog, or he'll wake the town."

Another voice from a little distance called, "Clarion!" in a guarded inflection; meantime the hound had discovered his mistress, and was jumping about her horse, giving little yelps of pleasure.

In another instant Charles came running up. "What's wrong?" he questioned.

"'T is a couple of riders I've halted," said the voice from the shadow.

"Out of the way!" ordered Evatt. "Ye've no right to prevent us from going forward. I've pistols in my holsters, and ye'd best be careful how ye take the law into your own hands."

The groom gave an exclamation as he recognised the riders; and paying no attention to Evatt, he sprang to the side of the girl and rested his hand on the bridle, as if to prevent her horse from moving, while he asked in amazement: "What brings you here?"

Speechless and shamed, the girl hung her head.

"Let go that bridle, ye whelp!" blustered Evatt, throwing back the flap of his holster and pulling out a heavy horse pistol.

As he made the motion, the bondsman dropped the rein and seized the hand that held the weapon. For a moment there was a sharp struggle, in which the third man, who sprang from the shadow, joined. Nor did Evatt cease resistance until three men more came running up, when, overborne by numbers, he was dragged from his horse and held to the ground. In the whole contest both sides had maintained an almost absolute silence, as if each had reasons for not waking the villagers.

"Stuff a sod of grass in his mouth to keep him quiet," ordered Charles, panting, "and tie him hand and foot." Taking a lantern from one of the men, he walked back to the speechless and frightened girl and held the light to her face. "'T is not possible you — you — oh! I'll never believe it of you."

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With pride and mortification struggling for mastery, Janice replied: "What you think matters not to me."

"You were eloping with this man?"

Though the groom's thoughts were of no moment to the girl, she replied: "To escape marrying Philemon Hennion."

"What things women are!" he exclaimed contemptuously.

"You deserve no better than to be his doll common, but —"

"We were to be married," cried Janice.

"In the reign of Queen Dick!"

"This very day on the 'Asia' frigate."

"A likely tale," jeered the man. "Bring that fellow down to the boat," he called, and catching hold of the bridle, he started walking.

"Whither are you taking me?" inquired Janice, in fright.

"The parson is down by the river, helping transfer the powder, and I'm going to leave you with him to take back to Greenwood."

"Oh, Charles," besought the girl, "you'll not be so cruel! I'd sooner die than — than — Think what mommy — and dadda — and the whole village — I didn't want to go with him — but — Please, oh, please! You'll not disgrace me? I'll promise never to go off with him — indeed —"

"Of that I'll be bound," sneered the servant, with a harsh laugh, "for I'm going to take him with me to Cambridge."

For a moment Janice was silent, then cried: "If you only knew how I hate you."

The man laughed bitterly. "I do — from the way I hate — ay, and despise you!"

Another moment brought them to the edge of a wharf, where a number of men were busying themselves in stowing barrels on board a small sloop. "Hold this horse," ordered the servant, while he joined one of the toilers and drew him apart in consultation.

"Powder aboard, cap'n," presently called some one.

"Take that man and stow him below decks along with it," ordered Charles. "Good-by, parson. I hope to send good news from Cambridge of this night's work. Boys, take Bagby out of the stocks before daylight, and tell him if the Invincibles want their powder to follow us, and they shall have fifty

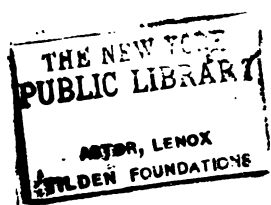
rounds of it a man, with plenty of fighting to boot. All aboard that are for the front ! ”

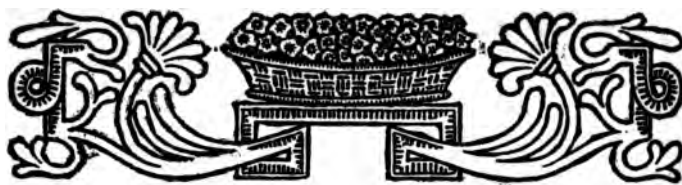
Half a dozen men followed, while those on the wharf cast off the fasts. But all at once stood still when the parson, with bowed head, began a prayer for the powder, for the adventurers who took it, and for the general and army it was designed to serve. Sternly yet eloquently he prayed until the boat had drifted with the tide out of hearing, and the creak of the blocks came across the water, showing that those on board were making sail. Then, as the men on the wharf dispersed, he mounted the horse Evatt had ridden.

“Janice Meredith,” he said sternly, “I propose to occupy this ride with a discourse upon the doctrine of total depravity, from which downward path you have been saved this night, deducing therefrom an illustration of the workings of grace through foreordination, — the whole with a view to the saving of your soul and the admonishment of your sinful nature.”



“ But all at once stood still, when the parson began a prayer.”





XXI

A SUDDEN SCARCITY OF BEAUX

IT was daylight when the parson and Janice rode through the gate of Greenwood, and the noise of hoofs brought both the girl's parents to the window of their bedroom in costumes as yet by no means completed. Yet when, in reply to the demand of the squire as to what was the meaning of this arrival, it was briefly explained to him that his daughter had attempted to elope with his guest, he descended to the porch without regard to scantiness of clothing.

A terrible ten minutes for Janice succeeded, while the squire thundered his anger at her, and she, overcome, sobbed her grief and mortification into Daisy's mane. Then, when her father had drained the vials of his wrath, her mother appeared more properly garbed, and in her turn heaped blame and scorn on the girl's bowed head. For a time the squire echoed his wife's indignation, but it is one thing to express wrath oneself and quite another to hear it fulminated by some one else; so presently the squire's heart began to soften for his lass, and he attempted at last to interpose in palliation of her conduct. This promptly resulted in Mrs. Meredith's ordering Janice off the horse and to her room. "Where I'll finish what I have to say," announced her mother; and the girl, helped down by Mr. Meredith, did as she was told, longing only for death.

The week which succeeded was a nightmare to Janice, her mother constantly recurring to her wickedness, the servants addressing her with a scared breathlessness which made her feel that she was indeed declassed for ever, while the people of the neighbourhood, when she ventured out-of-doors, either grinned broadly or looked dourly when they met her, showing the girl that her shame was town property.

Mrs. Meredith also took frequent occasion to insist on the girl's marriage with Mr. McClave, on the ground that he alone could properly chasten her ; but to this the squire refused to listen, insisting that such a son-in-law he would never have, and that he was bound to Philemon. "We'll keep close watch on her for the time he's away, and then marry her out of hand the moment he's returned," he said.

Had the parents attempted to carry out the system of espionage that they enforced during the first month they would have had their hands full far longer than they dreamed. Week after week sped by, summer ripened into fall, and fall faded into winter, but Philemon came not. Little by little Janice's misconduct ceased to be a general theme of village talk, and the life at Greenwood settled back into its accustomed groove. Even the mutter of cannon before Boston was but a matter of newspaper news, and the war, though now fairly inaugurated, affected the squire chiefly by the loss of the bondsman, for whom he advertised in vain.

One incident which happened shortly after the proposed elopement, and which cannot be passed over without mention, was a call from Squire Hennion on Mr. Meredith. The master of Boxely opened the interview by shaking his fist within a few inches of the rubicund countenance of the master of Greenwood, and, suiting his words to the motion, he roared : "May Belza take yer, yer old ——" and the particular epithet is best omitted, the eighteenth-century vocabulary being more expressive than refined — "fer sendin' my boy ter Boston, wheer, belike, he'll never git away alive."

"Don't try to bully me !" snorted the squire, shaking his fist in turn, and much nearer to the hatchet-face of his antipathy. "Put that down or I'll teach ye manners ! Yes, damn ye, for the first time in your life ye shall be made to behave like a gentleman !"

"I defy yer ter make me !" retorted Hennion, with unconscious humour.

"Heyday !" said Mrs. Meredith, entering, "what's the cause of all this hurly-burly?"

"Enuf cause, an' ter spare," howled Hennion. "Here this ——" once more the title is left blank for propriety's sake —

"hez beguiled poor Phil inter goin' on some fool errand ter Boston, an' the feller knew so well I would n't hev it thet all he dun wuz ter write me a line, tellin' how this — insisted he should go, an' thet he'd started. 'Twixt yer whiffet of a galan' yer old — of a husband, yer've bewitched all the sense the feller ever hed in his noddle, durn yer!"

"Let him talk," jeered the squire. "'T will not bring Phil back. What's more, I'll make him smile the other side of his teeth before I've done with him. Harkee, man, I've a rod in pickle that will make ye cry small." The squire took a bundle of papers from an iron box and flourished them under Hennion's nose. "There are assignments of every mortgage ye owe, ye old fox, and pay day's coming."

"Let it," sneered the owner of Boxely. "Yer think I did n't know, I s'pose? Waal, thet's wheer yer aout. Phil, he looked so daown in the maouth just afore yer went ter York thet I knew theer must be somethin' ter make him act so pukish, an' I feels araound a bit, an' as he ain't the best hand at deceivin' I hez the fac's in no time. An' as I could n't hev them 'ere mortgages in better hands, I tell'd him ter go ahead an' help yer all he could. 'T was I gave him the list of them I owed."

The squire, though taken aback, demanded: "And I suppose ye have the money ready to douse on pay day?"

Hennion sniggered. "Yer won't be hard, thet I know, squire. I reckon yer'll go easy on me."

"If ye think I'm going to spare ye on account of Phil ye are mightily out. I'll foreclose the moment each falls due, that I warn ye."

"Haow kin yer foreclose whin theer ain't no courts?"

"Pish!" snapped the creditor. "'T is purely temporary; within a twelve-month there'll be law enough. Think ye England is sleeping?"

"We'll see, we'll see," retorted Hennion. "In the meantime, squire, I hope yer won't worrit because I don't pay interest. Times is thet onsettled thet yer kain't sell craps naw nothin', an' ready money's pretty hard ter come by."

"Not I," rejoined the squire. "'T will enable me to fore-close all the quicker."

"When their's courts ter foreclose," replied Hennion, grinning suggestively. With this parting shot, he left the house and rode away.

On the same day this interview occurred, another took place in the Craigie House in Cambridge, then occupied as the headquarters of General Washington. The commander-in-chief was sitting in his room, busily engaged in writing, when an orderly entered and announced that a man who claimed to have important business, which he refused to communicate except to the general, desired word with him. The stranger was promptly ushered in, and stood revealed as a fairly tall, well-shaped young fellow, clad in coarse clothing, with a well-made wig of much better quality, which fitted him so ill as to suggest that it was never made for his head.

"I understand your Excellency is in dire need of powder," he said as he saluted.

A stern look came upon Washington's face. "Who are you, and how heard you that?" he demanded.

"My name is John Brereton. How I heard of your want was in a manner that needs not to be told, as —"

"Tell you shall," exclaimed Washington, warmly. "The fact was known to none but the general officers and to the powder committee, and if there has been unguarded or unfaithful speech it shall be traced to its source."

"Your Excellency wrote a letter to the committee of Middlesex County in Jersey?"

"I did."

"The committee refused to part with the powder."

Washington rose. "Have they no public spirit, no consideration of our desperate plight?" he exclaimed.

"But your Excellency, though the committee would not part with the powder, some lads of spirit would not see you want for it, and — and by united effort we succeeded in getting and bringing to Cambridge twenty half-barrels of powder, which is now outside, subject to your orders."

With an exclamation mingling disbelief and hope, the commander sprang to the window. A glance took in the two carts loaded with kegs, and he turned, his face lighted with emotion.

"God only knows the grinding anxiety, the sleepless nights, I have suffered, knowing how defenceless the army committed to my charge actually was! You have done our cause a service impossible to measure or reward." He shook the man's hand warmly.

"And I ask in payment, your Excellency, premission to volunteer."

"In what capacity?"

"I have served in the British forces as an officer, but all I ask is leave to fight, without regard to rank."

"Tell me the facts of your life."

"As I said, my name is John Brereton. Nothing else about me will ever be known from me."

Washington scrutinised the man with an intent surprise. "You cannot expect us to trust you on such information."

"An hour ago it would have been possible for me to have sneaked by stealth into the British lines with this letter," said the man, taking from his pocket a sheet of paper and handing it to the general. "What think you would Sir William Howe have given me for news, over the signature of General Washington, that the Continental Army had less than ten rounds of powder per man?"

Washington studied the face of the young fellow steadily for twenty seconds. "Are you good at penmanship?" he asked.

"I am a deft hand at all smouting work," replied Brereton.

"Then, sir," said Washington, smiling slightly, "as I wish to keep an eye on you until you have proved yourself, I shall for the present find employment for you in my own family."

Thus a twelve-month passed without Philemon Hennion, John Evatt, Charles Fownes, Parson McClave, or any other lover so much as once darkening the doors of Greenwood.

"Janice," remarked her mother at the end of the year, "dost realise that in less than a twelve-month thou'lt be a girl of eighteen and without a lover, much less a husband? I was wed before I was seventeen, and so are all respectably behaved females. See what elopements come to. 'T is evident thou'rt to die an old maid."



XXII

THE OLIVE BRANCH

IF this year was bare of courtships, of affairs of interest it was far otherwise. Scarcely was 1776 ushered in than news came that the raw and ill-equipped force, which for nine months had held the British beleaguered in Boston, had at last obtained sufficient guns and powder to assume the offensive, and had, by seizing Dorchester Heights, compelled the evacuation of the city. Howe's army and the fleet sailed away without molestation to Halifax, leaving behind them a rumour, however, that great reinforcements were coming from Great Britain, and that upon their arrival, New York would be reduced and held as a strategic base from which all the middle colonies would be overrun and reduced to submission.

This probability turned military operations southward. General Lee, who early in the new year had been given command of the district around Manhattan Island, set about a system of fortifications, even while he protested that the water approaches made the city impossible to hold against such a naval force as Britain was certain to employ. At the same time that this protection was begun against an outward enemy, a second was put in train against the inward one, and this involved the household of Meredith.

One morning, while the squire stood superintending two of his laborers, as they were seeding a field, a rider stopped his horse at the wall dividing it from the road and hailed him loudly. Mr. Meredith, in response to the call, walked toward the man; but the moment he was near enough to recognise Captain Bagby, he came to a halt, indecisive as to what course to pursue toward his enemy.

"Can't do no talking at this distance, squire," sang out Bagby, calmly; "and as I've got something important to say, and my nag prevents me from coming to you, I reckon you'll have to do the travelling."

After a moment's hesitation, the master of Greenwood came to the stone wall. But it was with a bottled-up manner which served to indicate his inward feelings that he demanded crustily, "What want ye with me?"

"It's this way," explained Joe. "If what's said is true, Howe is coming to York with a bigger army than we can raise, to fight us, if we fights, but with power to offer us all we wants, if we won't. Now there's a big party in Congress as is mortal afraid that there'll be a reconciliation, and so they is battling tooth and nail to get independence declared before Howe can get here, so that there sha'n't be no possibility of making up."

"The vile Jesuits!" exclaimed the squire, wrathfully, "and but a three-month gone they were tricking their constituents with loud-voiced cries that the charge that they desired independence was one trumped up by the ministry to injure the American cause, and that they held the very thought in abhorrence."

"'Tis n't possible to always think the same way in politics straight along," remarked the politician, "and that's just what I come over to see you about. Now, if there's going to be war, I guess I'll be of some consequence, and if there's going to be a peace, like as not you'll be on top; and I'll be concerned if I can tell which it is like to be."

"I can tell ye," announced Mr. Meredith. "'Tis —"

"Perhaps you can, squire," broke in Bagby, "but your opinions have n't proved right so far, so just let me finish what I have to say first. Have you heard that the Committee of Safety has arrested the Governor?"

"No. Though 't is quite of a piece with your other lawless proceedings."

"Some of his letters was intercepted, and they was so toryish that 't was decided he should be put under guard. And at the same time it was voted to take precautionary proceedings against all the other enemies of the country."

"Then why are n't ye under arrest?" snapped the squire.

"'Cause there 's too many of us, and too few of you," explained Bagby, equably. "Now the Committee has sent orders to each county committee to make out a list of those we think ought to be arrested, and a meeting 's to be held this afternoon to act on it. Old Hennion he came to me last night and said he wanted your name put on, and he'd vote to recommend that you be taken to Connecticut and held in prison there along with the Governor."

"Pox the old villain!" fumed Mr. Meredith. "For a six-months I've sat quiet, as ye know, and 't is merely his way of paying the debts he owes me. A fine state ye've brought the land to, when a man can settle private scores in such a manner."

"There is n't no denying that you're no friend to the cause, and if any one 's to be took up hereabouts, it should be you. Still, I'm a fair-play fellow, and so I thought, before I let him have his way, I'd come over and have a talk with you, to see if we could n't fix things."

"How?"

"If the king 's come to his senses and intends to deal fair with us," remarked Bagby, with a preliminary glance around and a precautionary dropping of his voice, "that 's all I ask, and so I don't see no reason for attacking his friends until we are more certain of what 's coming. At the same time, if Hennion wants to jail you, I think you 'll own I have n't much reason to take your part. You've always been as stuck up and abusive to me as you well could be. So 't is only natural I should n't stand up for you."

The lord of Greenwood swallowed before he said, "Perhaps I've not been neighbourly, but what sort of revenge is it to force me from my home, and distress my wife and daughter?"

"That 's it," assented the Committeeman. "And so I came over to see what could be done. We have n't been the best of friends down to now, but that is n't saying that we could n't have been, if you'd been as far-seeing as me, and known who to side in with. It seemed to me that if I stood by you in this scrape we might fix it up to act together. I

take it that my brains and your money could run Middlesex County about as we pleased, if we quit fighting, and work together. Squire Hennion would have to take a back seat in politics, I guess."

The squire could not wholly keep the pleasure the thought gave him from his face. "'T would be a god-send to the county," he cried. "Ye know that as well as I."

"As to that, I'll say nothing," answered Joe. "But of course, if I'm going to throw my influence with you, I expect something in return."

"And what's that?" asked Mr. Meredith, still dwelling on his revenge.

"I need n't tell you, squire, that I'm a rising man, and I'm going to go on rising. 'T won't be long before I'm about what I please, especially if we make a deal. Now, though there has n't been much intercourse between us, yet I've had my eye on your daughter for a long spell, and if you'll give your consent to my keeping company with her, I'll be your friend through thick and thin."

For a moment Mr. Meredith stood with wide-open mouth, then he roared: "Damn your impudence! ye — ye — have my lass, ye — be off with ye — ye —" There all articulate speech ended, the speaker only sputtering in his wrath, but his two fists, shaken across the wall, spoke eloquently the words that choked him.

"I thought you'd play the fool, as usual," retorted the suitor, as he pulled his horse's head around. "You'll live to regret this day, see if you don't." And with this vague threat he trotted away toward Brunswick.

Whether Bagby had purposely magnified the danger with the object of frightening the squire into yielding to his wishes, or whether he and Hennion were outvoted by Parson McClave and the other members of the Committee, Mr. Meredith never learned. Of what was resolved he was not left long in doubt, for the morning following, the whole Committee, with a contingent of the Invincibles, invaded the privacy of Greenwood, and required of him that he surrender to them such arms as he was possessed of, and sign a parol that he would in no way give aid or comfort to the invaders. To these two require-

ments the squire yielded, at heart not a little comforted that the proceedings against him were no worse, though vocally he protested at such "robbery and coercion."

"Ye lord it high-handedly now," he told the party, "but ye'll sing another song ere long."

"Yer've been predictin' thet fer some time," chuckled Hennion, aggravatingly.

"'Twill come all the surer that it comes tardily. 'Slow and sure doth make secure,' as ye'll dearly learn. We'll soon see how debtors who won't pay either principal or interest like the law!"

Hennion chuckled again. "Yer see, squire," he said, "it don't seem ter me ter be my interest ter pay principal, nor my principle ter pay interest. Ef I wuz yer, I would n't het myself over them mogiges; I ain't sweatin'."

"I'll sweat ye yet, ye old rascal," predicted the creditor.'

"When'll thet be?" asked Hennion.

"When we are no longer tyrannised over by a pack of debtors, scoundrels, and Scotch Presbyterians," with which remark the squire stamped away.

It must be confessed, however, that bad as the master of Greenwood deemed the political situation, he gave far more thought to his private affairs. Every day conditions were becoming more unsettled. His overseer had left his employ to enlist, throwing all care of the farm on the squire's shoulders; a second bondsman, emboldened by Charles' successful levanting, had done the same, making labourers short-handed; while those who remained were more eager to find excuses taking them to Brunswick, that they might hear the latest news, and talk it over, than they were to give their undivided attention to reaping and hoeing. Finally, more and more tenants failed to appear at Greenwood on rent day, and so the landlord was called upon to ride the county over, dunning, none too successfully, the delinquent.

Engrossing as all this might be, Mr. Meredith was still too much concerned in public events not to occasionally find an excuse for riding into Brunswick and learning of their progress; and one evening as he approached the village, his eyes and ears both informed him that something unusual was in hand,

for muskets were being discharged, great fires were blazing on the green, and camped upon it was a regiment of troops.

Riding up to the tavern, where a rushing business was being done, the squire halted the publican as he was hurrying past with a handful of mugs, by asking, "What does all this mean?"

"Living jingo, but things is on the bounce," cried the landlord, excitedly. "Here 's news come that the British fleet of mor 'n a hundred sail is arrived inside o' Sandy Hook, an' all the Jersey militia hez been ordered out, an' here 's a whole regiment o' Pennsylvania 'Sociators on theer way tew Amboy tew help us fight 'em, an' more comin' ; an' as if everythin' was tew happen all tew once, here 's Congress gone an' took John Bull by the horns in real arnest." The cupbearer-to-man thrust a broadside, which he pulled from his pocket, into the squire's hand, and hastened away cellar-ward.

The squire unrumped the sheet, which was headed in bold-faced type : —

*In Congress, July 4, 1776,
A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States
of America in General Congress assembled.*

Ere he had more than seen the words, he was interrupted by Joe, who, glass in hand, left the bench and came to the rider, where, in a low voice, he said : —

"You see, squire, the independents has outsharped the other party, and got the thing passed before Howe got here. It was a durned smart trick, and don't leave either side nothing but to fight. I guess 't won't be long before you 'll be sorry enough you did n't take up with my offer."

Mr. Meredith, who had divided his attention between what his interlocutor was saying and the sentence, "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another," concluded that human events could wait, and ceasing to read, he gave his attention to the speaker.

"If ye think to frighten or grieve me, ye are mightily out," he trumpeted loudly. "Hitherto Britain has dealt gently with ye, but now ye 'll feel the full force of her wrath. A six

weeks will serve to bring the whole pack of ye to your knees, whining for pardon."

The prediction was greeted with a chorus of gibes and protests, and on the instant the squire was the centre of a struggling mass of militiamen and villagers, who roughly pulled him from his horse. But before they could do more, the colonel of the troops and the parson interfered, loudly commanding the mob to desist from all violence ; and with ill grace and with muttered threats and angry noddings of heads, the crowd, one by one, went back to their glasses. That the interference was none too prompt was shown by the condition of the squire, for his hat, peruke, and ruffles were all lying on the ground in tatters, his coat was ripped down the back, and one sleeve hung by a mere shred.

"You do wrong to anger the people unnecessarily, sir," said Mr. McClave, sternly. "Dost court ducking or other violence? Common prudence should teach you to be wiser."

The squire hastily climbed into the saddle. From that vantage point he replied, "Ye need not think Lambert Meredith is to be frightened into dumbness. But there are some who will talk smaller ere long." Then, acting more prudently than he spoke, he shook his reins and started Joggles homeward.

It was little grief, as can be imagined, that the events of the next few weeks brought to Greenwood ; and the day the news came that Washington's force had been outflanked and successfully driven from its position on the hills of Brooklyn, with a loss of two of its best brigades, the squire was so jubilant that nothing would do but to have up a bottle of his best Madeira, — a wine hitherto never served except to guests of distinction.

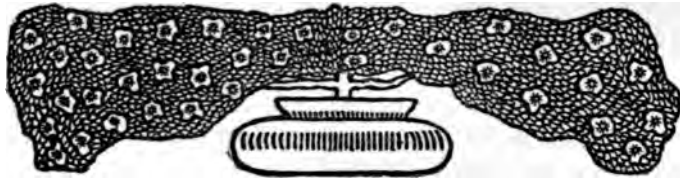
"Give a knave rope enough and he'll hang himself," he said gloatingly. "Because the land favoured them at Boston, they got the idea they were invincible, and Congress would have it that New York must be defended, though a hundred thousand troops could not have done it against the fleet, let alone Howe's army. Ho ! By this time the rogues have learned what fifteen thousand butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers can do 'gainst thirty thousand veterans. And they've had but the first mouthful of the dose they'll have to swallow."

The jubilation of the prophet was short-lived, for even as he spoke, and with decanter but half emptied, the tramp of feet sounded in the hallway, and the door was flung open to admit four men, armed with muskets.

"In the name of the Continental Congress, and by orders of General Washington, I arrests yer, Lambert Meredith," announced the spokesman.

"For what?" cried Janice.

"For treason."



XXIII

HEADQUARTERS IN 1776

ON September 15, a group of horsemen, occupying a slight eminence of ground on the island of Manhattan, were gazing eastward. Below and nearer the water were spread lines of soldiers behind intrenchments, while from three men-of-war lying in the river came a heavy cannonade that swept the shore line and spread over the water a pall of smoke which, as it drifted to leeward, obscured the Long Island shore from view.

"'Tis evidently a feint, your Excellency," presently asserted one of the observers, "to cover a genuine attack elsewhere — most likely above the Haarlem."

The person addressed — a man with an anxious, care-worn face that made him look fifty at least — lowered his glass, but did not reply for some moments. "You may be right, sir," he remarked, "though to me it has the air of an intended attack. What think you, Reed?"

"I agree with Mifflin. The attack will be higher up. Hah! Look there!"

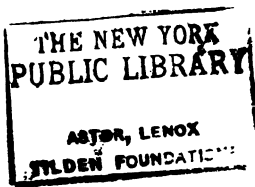
A rift had come in the smoke, and a column of boats, moving with well-timed oars, could for a moment be seen as it came forward.

"They intend a landing at Kip's Bay, as I surmised," exclaimed the general. "Gentlemen, we shall be needed below." He turned to Reed and gave him an order concerning reinforcements, then wheeled and, followed by the rest, trotted over the ploughed field. Once on the highway, he spurred his horse, putting him to a sharp canter.

"What troops hold the works on the bay, Mifflin?" asked one of the riders.



“From three men-of-war came a heavy cannonade that swept the shore line.”



"Fellows' and Parsons' brigades, Brereton."

"If they are as good at fighting as at thieving, they'll distinguish themselves."

"Ay," laughed Mifflin. "If the red coats were but chickens or cattle, the New England militia would have had them all captured ere now."

"They'll be hearn from to-day," said a third officer. "They've earthworks to git behind, and they'll give the British another Bunker Hill."

"Then you ought to be quick, General Putnam," said Brereton, "for that's the fighting you like."

The road lay in the hollow of the land, and not till the party reached a slight rise were they able once more to get a glimpse of the shores of the bay. Then it was to find the flotilla well in toward its intended landing-place, and the American troops retreating in great disorder from their breastworks.

Exclamations of surprise and dismay sprang from the lips of the riders, and their leader, turning his horse, jumped the fence and galloped across the fields to intercept the fugitives. Five minutes brought them up to the runaways, who, out of breath with the sharpness of their pace, had come to a halt, and were being formed by their officers into a little less disorder.

"General Fellows, what was the reason for this shameful retreat?" demanded the general, when within speaking distance.

"The men were seized with a panic on the approach of the boats, your Excellency, and could not be held in the lines."

Washington faced the regiments, his face blazing with scorn. "You ran before a shot had been fired! Before you lost a man, you deserted works that have taken weeks to build, and which could be held against any such force." He paused for a moment, and then, drawing his sword, he called with spirit: "Who's for recovering them?"

A faint cheer passed down the lines; but almost as it sounded, the red coats of fifty or sixty light infantry came into view on the road, a skirmishing party thrown forward from the landing to reconnoitre. Had they been Howe's whole

army, however, they could not have proved more effective, for instantly the two brigades broke and dissolved once more into squads of flying men.

At such cowardice, Washington lost all control of himself, and, dashing in among the fugitives, he passionately struck right and left with the flat of his sword, thundering curses at them; while Putnam and Mifflin, as well as the aides, followed his example. It was hopeless, however, to stay the rush; the men took the blows and the curses unheeding, while throwing away their guns and scattering in every direction.

Made frantic by such conduct, Washington wheeled his horse. "Charge!" he cried, and rode toward the enemy, waving his sword.

If the commander-in-chief had hoped to put some of his own courage into the troops by his example, he failed. Not a man of the runaways ceased fleeing. None the less, as if regardless of consequences in his desperation, Washington rode on, until one of the aides dashed his spurs into his horse and came up beside his general at a mad gallop.

"Your Excellency!" he cried, "'t is but hopeless and will but end in —" Then, as his superior did not heed him, he seized the left rein of his horse's bridle and, pulling on it, swung him about in a large circle, letting go his hold only when they were riding away from the enemy.

Washington offered no resistance, and rode the hundred yards to where the rest of his staff were standing, with bowed head. Nothing was said as he rejoined the group, and Blueskin, disappointed in the charge for which he had shown as much eagerness as his rider, let his mind recur to thoughts of oats; finding no control in the hand that held his bridle, he set out at an easy trot toward headquarters.

They had not ridden many yards ere Washington lifted his head, the expression of hopelessness, which had taken the place of that of animation, in turn succeeded by one of stern repose. He issued three orders to as many of the riders, showing that his mind had not been dwelling idly on the disaster, slipped his sword into its scabbard, and gathered up his reins again.

"There!" thought Blueskin, as a new direction was in-

licated by his bit, "I'm going to have another spell of it riding all ways of a Sunday, just as we did last night. And it's coming on to rain."

Rain it did very quickly; but from post to post the horse-men passed, the sternly silent commander speaking only when giving the necessary orders to remedy so far as possible the disaster of the afternoon. Not till eleven, and then in a thoroughly drenched condition, did they reach the Morris House on Haarlem Heights. It was to no rest, however, that the general arrived; for, as he dismounted, Major Gibbs of his life guards informed him that the council of war he had called was gathered and only awaited his attendance.

"Get you some supper, gentlemen," he ordered, to such of his aides as were still of the party, "for 't is likely that you will have more riding when the council have deliberated."

"'T is advice he might take himself to proper advantage," said one of the juniors, while they were stripping off their wet coverings in a side room.

"Ay," asserted Brereton. "The general uses us hard, Tilghman, but he uses himself harder." Then aloud he called, "Billy!"

"Yis, sah!"

"Make a glass of rum punch and take it in to his Excellency."

"Foh de Lord, sah, I doan dar go in, an' yar know marse neber drink no spirits till de day's work dun."

"Make a dish of tea, then, you old coward, and I'll take it to him so soon as I get these slops off me. 'Fore George! How small-clothes stick when they're wet!"

"You mean when a man's so foppish that he will have them made tight enough to display the goodness of his thighs," rejoined Gibbs, who, being dry, was enjoying the plight of the rest. "Make yourselves smart, gentlemen, there are ladies at quarters to-night."

"You don't puff that take-in on us, sirrah," retorted Tilghman.

"Pon honour. They arrived a six hours ago, and have been waiting to see the general."

"You may be bound they are old and plain," prophesied

Brereton, "or Gibbs would be squiring them, 'stead of wasting time on us."

"There you 're cast," rejoined the major, "I caught but a glimpse, yet 't was enough to prove to me that all astronomers lie."

"How so?"

"In saying that but twice in a century is there a transit of Venus."

"Then why bide you here, man?"

"That 's the disgustful rub. They were with a man under suspicion, and orders were that none should hold converse with him before the general examined into it. A plague on 't!"

Discussion of Venus was here broken by the announcement of supper, and the make-shift meal was still unfinished when the general's body-servant appeared with the tea. Taking it, Brereton marched boldly to the council door, and, giving a knock, he went in without awaiting a reply.


The group of anxious-faced men about the table looked up, and Washington, with a frown, demanded, "For what do you interrupt us, sir?"

The young officer put the tea down on the map lying in front of the general. "Billy didn't dare take this to your Excellency, so I made bold to e'en bring it myself."

"This is no time for tea, Colonel Brereton."

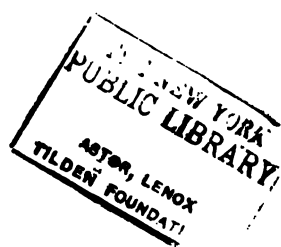
"'T is no time for the army to lose their general," replied the aide. "I pray you drink it, sir, for our sake if you won't for your own."

A kindly look supplanted the sternness of the previous moment on the general's face. "I thank you for your thoughtfulness, Brereton," he said, raising the cup and pouring some of the steaming drink into the saucer. Then as the officer started to go, he added, "Hold!" Picking up a small bundle of papers which lay on the table, he continued: "Harrison tells me that there is a prisoner under guard for my examination. I shall scarce be able to attend to it this evening, and to-morrow is like to be a busy day. Take charge of the matter, and report to me the moment the council breaks up. Here are the papers."





“From post to post the horsemen passed.”



Standing in the dim light of the hallway, the aide opened the papers and read them hastily. Either the strain on the eyes, or some emotion, put a frown on his face, and it was still there as he walked to the door before which stood a sentry, and passed into a badly lighted room.

"Powerful proud ter meet yer Excellency," was his greeting from a man in civilian shorts and a military coat, who held out his hand. "Captain Bagby desired his compliments ter yer, an' ter say that legislative dooties pervented his attindin' ter the matter hisself."

Paying no heed to either outstretched hand or words, the officer looked first at a man standing beside the fireplace and then at the two women, who had risen as he entered. He waited a moment, glancing from one to the other, as if expecting each of them to speak; but when they did not, he asked gruffly of the guard, though still with his eyes on the prisoners: "And for what were the ladies brought?"

"Becuz they wud n't be left behind on no accaount. Yer see, yer Excellency, things hez been kinder onsettled in Middlesex Caounty, an' it hain't been a joyful time to them as wuz Tories; so when orders cum ter bring old Meredith ter York Island, his wife an' gal wuz so scar't nothin' would do but they must come along."

"Ay," spoke up the man by the fireplace, bitterly. "A nice pass ye've brought things to, that women dare not tarry in their own homes for fear of insult."

"You may go," said the officer to the captor, pointing at the door.

"Ain't I ter hear the 'zamination, yer Excellency?" demanded the man, regretfully. "The hull caounty is sot on knowin' ther fac's." But as the hand still pointed to the entrance, the man passed reluctantly through it.

Taking a seat shadowed from the dim light of the solitary candle, the officer asked: "You are aware, Mr. Meredith, on what charge you are in military custody?"

"Not I," growled the master of Greenwood. "For more than a year gone I've taken no part in affairs, but 't is all of a piece with ye Whigs that—to trump up a charge against —"

"This is no trumpety accusation," interrupted the officer. "I hold here a letter to Sir William Howe, found after our army took possession of Boston, signed by one Clowes, and conveying vastly important information as to our lack of powder, which he states he obtained through you."

"Now a pox on the villain!" cried the squire. "Has he not tried to do me enough harm in other ways, but he must add this to it? Janice, see the evil ye've wrought."

"Oh, dadda," cried the girl, desperately, "I know I was — was a wicked creature, but I've been sorry, and suffered for it, and I don't think 't is fair to blame me for this. 'T was not I who brought him —"

"Silence, miss!" interrupted her mother. "Wouldst sauce thy father in his trouble?"

"I presume you obtained the knowledge Clowes transmitted from your daughter?" surmised the officer.

"My daughter? Not I! How could a chit of a girl know aught of such things? Clowes got it from young Hennion, and devil a thing had I really to do with it, write what he pleases."

"Pray take chairs, ladies," suggested the aide, with more politeness. "Now, sir, unravel this matter, so far as 't is known to you."

When the squire's brief tale of how the information was obtained and forwarded to Boston was told, the officer was silent for some moments. Then he asked: "Hast had word of Clowes since then?"

"Not sight or word since the night the —"

"Oh, dadda," moaned Janice, "please don't!"

"Since he attempted to steal my girl from me. And if e'er I meet him I trust I'll have my horsewhip handy."

"Is Hennion where we can lay hold upon him?"

"Not he. 'T was impossible for him to get out of Boston, try his best, and the last word we had of him — wrote to his rascally father — was that he'd 'listed in Ruggles' loyalists."

"Then the only man we can bring to heel is this bond-servant of thine."

"Not even he. The scamp took French leave, and if ye want him ye must search your own army."

"Canst aid us to find him?"

"I know naught of him, or his doings, save that last June I received the price I paid for his bond, through Parson McClave, who perhaps can give ye word of him."

The officer rose, saying: "Mr. Meredith, I shall report on your case to the general, so soon as he is free, and have small doubt that you will be acquitted of blame and released. I fear me you will find headquarters' hospitality somewhat wanting in comfort, for we're o'ercrowded, and you arrive in times of difficulty. But I'll try to see that the ladies get a room, and, whatever comes, 't will be better than the guard-house." He went to the hall door and called, "Grayson!"

"Well?" shouted back some one.

"There are two ladies to be lodged here for the night. May I offer them our room?"

"Ay. And my compliments to them, and say they may have my company along with it, if they be youngish."

"Tut, man," answered Brereton, reprovingly. "None of your Virginian freeness, for they can hear you." He turned and said: "You must be content with a deal feather-bed on the floor here, Mr. Meredith, but if the ladies will follow me I will see that they are bestowed in more comfortable quarters;" and he led the way upstairs, where, lighting a candle, he showed them to a small room, very much cluttered by military clothes and weapons, thrown about in every direction. "I apologise, ladies," he remarked; "but for days it's been ride and fight, till when sleeping hours came 't was bad enough to get one's clothes off, let alone put them tidy."

"And indeed, sir, there is no need of apology," responded Mrs. Meredith, warmly, "save for us, for robbing you of the little comfort you possess."

"'T is a pleasure amid all the strife we live in to be able to do a service," replied the officer, gallantly, as he bowed low over Mrs. Meredith's hand and then kissed it. He turned to the girl and did the same. "May you rest well," he added, and left the room.

"Oh, mommy!" exclaimed Janice, "didst ever see a more distinguished or finer-shaped man? And his dress and manners are —"

"Janice Meredith! Wilt never give thy thoughts to something else than men?"

"Well, Brereton," asked Tilghman as the aide joined his fellow-soldiers, "how did his Excellency take your boldness?"

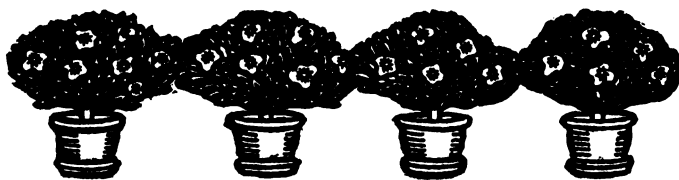
"As punishment he sent me to examine Gibbs' Venus."

"Devil take your luck!" swore Gibbs. "I'll be bound ye made it none too short. Gaze at the smug look on the dandy's face."

Brereton laughed gleefully as he stripped off his coat and rolled it up into a pillow. "I've just kissed mamma's hand," he remarked.

"I can't say much for thy taste!"

"In order," coolly went on Brereton, as he stretched himself flat on the floor, "that I might then kiss that of Venus — and over hers I did not hurry, lads. Therefore, gentlemen, my present taste is, despite Gibbs' slur, most excellent, and I expect sweet dreams till his Excellency wants me. Silence in the ranks."



XXIV

THE VALUE OF A FRIEND

AS the sun rose on the following morning, Brereton came cantering up to headquarters.

"Is his Excellency gone?" he demanded of the sentry, and received reply that Washington had ridden away toward the south ten minutes before. Leaving his horse with the man, the aide ran into the house and returned in a moment with a great hunk of corn bread and two sausages in his hand. Springing into the saddle, he set off at a rapid trot, munching voraciously as he rode.

"Steady, dear lass," he remarked to the mare. "If you make me lose any of this cake, I'll never forgive you, Janice."

Fifteen minutes served to bring the officer to a group of horsemen busy with field-glasses. Riding into their midst, he saluted, and said: "The Maryland regiments are in position, your Excellency." Then falling a little back, he looked out over the plain stretched before them. Barely had he taken in the two Continental regiments lying "at ease" half-way down the heights on which he was, and the line of their pickets on the level ground, when three companies of red-coated light infantry debouched from the woods that covered the corresponding heights to the southward. As the skirmishers fell back on their supports, the British winded their bugles triumphantly, sounding, not a military order, but the fox-hunting "stole away," — a blare intended to show their utter contempt for the Americans.

Washington's cheeks flushed as the derisive notes came floating up the hills, and he pressed his lips together in an attempt to hide the mortification the insult cost him. "They do not intend we shall forget yesterday," he said.

"We'll pay them dear for the insult yet," cried Brereton, hotly.

"T is a point gained that they think us beneath contempt," muttered Grayson; "for that is half-way to beating them."

"Colonel Reed, order three battalions of Weedon's and Knowlton's rangers to move along under cover of the woods, and endeavour to get in the rear of their main party," directed the commander-in-chief, after a moment's discussion with Generals Greene and Putnam. "As you know the ground, guide them yourself."

"Plague take his luck!" growled Brereton.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Tilghman, jeeringly. "Some of us have hands to kiss and some regiments to fight. Harkee, macaroni. The general thinks 't would be a pity to spot those modish buskins and gloves. So much for thy dandyism."

"Colonel Brereton," said the general, "order the two Maryland regiments to move up in support of Knowlton."

Brereton saluted, and, as he wheeled, touched his thumb to his nose at Tilghman. "You are dished," he whispered. "The general dresses too well himself to misjudge a man because he tries to keep neat and *à la mode*."

A quarter of an hour later, as battalions of Griffiths' and Richards' regiments advanced under guidance of Brereton, the sharpness of the volleys in their front showed that the fighting was begun; and in response to his order, they broke into double-quick time. Once out of the timber, it was to find the Connecticut rangers scattered in small groups wherever cover was to be had, but pouring in a hot fire at the enemy, who had been reinforced materially.

"Damn them!" cried Brereton. "Will they never fight except under cover?" Louder he shouted: "Forward! Charge them, boys!" The order given, he rode toward the rangers. "Where's your colonel?" he shouted.

"Dead," cried one, "and there's no one to tell us what to do."

"Do?" roared the aide. "Get out from behind that cover, and be damned to you. Show that Connecticut does n't always skulk. Come on!"

A cheer broke out, and, without even stopping to form, the men went forward, driving the enemy into the woods for shelter, and then forcing them through it. The fire of the

British slackened as they fell back, and when new Continental troops appeared on their right flank as well, the retreat became almost a rout.

"We'll drive them the length of the island," yelled Brereton, frantic with excitement, as the men went clambering up the rocks after the flying enemy.

"Colonel Brereton, his Excellency directs you to call in the regiments to their former position," shouted Grayson, cantering up.

Brereton swore forcibly before he galloped among the men, and even after they, in obedience to his orders, had fallen back slowly and taken up their original position, he growled to the aide as they began the ascent, "I'm sick of this over-caution, Grayson! What in —"

"The general was right," asserted Grayson. "Look there." He pointed over the treetops that they had now risen above to where columns of Royal Highlanders and Hessian Yagers were hastening forward at double-quick. "You would have had a sharp skimper-scamper hadst been allowed to go another half-mile."

"'Tis too bad, though," sighed the young officer, "that when the men will fight they have to be checked."

"Be thankful you did your double-quick in the cool of the morning, and are done with it. Lord! it makes me sweat just to see the way they are hurrying those poor Yagers. 'Tis evident we've given them a real scare."

Upon reaching the top of the height Brereton rode forward to where Washington still stood. "I tried to have the 'stole away' sounded, your Excellency," he said exultingly, "but those who knew it were so out of breath chasing them that there was not a man to wind it."

Washington's eyes lighted up as he smiled at the enthusiasm of the young fellow. "At least you may be sure that they had less wind than you, for they ran farther. They've had the best reply to their insult we could give them."

"Thet there fox they wuz gwine tu hunt did a bit of huntin' hisself," chuckled Putnam.

"They are still falling back on their supports," remarked Greene. "Evidently there is to be no more fighting to-day."

"They've had their bellyful, I guess," surmised Putnam.

"Then they're better off than I am," groaned Brereton.

"I could eat an ox."

When the fact became obvious that the British had no intention of renewing their intended attack, a general move was made toward quarters, and as they rode Brereton pushed up beside Washington and talked with him for a moment.


The commander ended the interview by nodding his head. "Colonel Tilghman," he ordered, as Brereton dropped behind, "ride on to announce our coming; also present my compliments to Mr. Meredith and bespeak his company and that of his ladies to dinner."

Mrs. Meredith and Janice, not having gone to bed till after one the previous night, slept until they were wakened by the firing; and when they had dressed and descended it was to find headquarters practically deserted, save for the squire and a corporal's guard. At the suggestion of the servant who gave them breakfast, they climbed to the cupola of the house, but all they could see of the skirmish were the little clouds of smoke that rose above the trees and the distant advance of the British reinforcements. Presently even these ceased or passed from view, and then succeeded what Janice thought a very "mopish" two hours, terminated at last by the arrival of the aide with his invitation, which sent her to her room for a little extra prinking.

"If I had only worn my lutestring," she sighed. Her toilet finished, — and the process had been lengthened by the trembling of her hands, — Janice descended falteringly to go through the hall to the veranda. In the doorway she paused, really taken aback by the number of men grouped about on the grass; and she stood there, with fifty eyes turned upon her, the picture of embarrassment, hesitating whether to run away and hide.

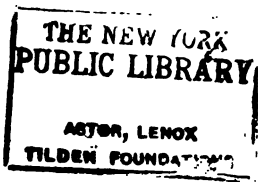
"Come hither, child," called her mother; and Janice, with a burning face and down-turned eyes, sped to her side. "This is my daughter Janice, your Excellency," she told the tall man with whom she had been speaking.

"Indeed, madam," said Washington, bowing politely over the girl's hand, and then looking her in the face with





“The only signs they could see of the skirmish were little clouds of smoke.”



pleasure. "My staff has had quite danger enough this morning without my subjecting them to this new menace. However, being lads of spirit, they will only blame me if I seek to spare them. Look at the eagerness of the blades for the engagement," he added with a laugh, as he turned to where the youngsters were idling about within call.

"Oh, your Excellency!" gasped Janice, "I—I—please may n't I talk to you?"

"Janice!" reproved her mother.

"Oh! I did n't mean that, of course," faltered the girl.

"'T was monstrous bold, and I only wanted —"

"Nay, my child," corrected the general. "Let an old man think it was intended. Mrs. Meredith, if you'll forgive the *pas*, I'll glad General Greene with the privilege of your hand to the table, while the young lady honours me with hers. Never fear for me, Miss Janice," he added, smiling; "the young rascals will be in a killing mood, but they dare not challenge their commander. There, I'll spare your blushes by joking you no more. I hope you were not greatly discomforted in your accommodation?" he asked, as they took their seats at the long table under the tent on the lawn.

"No, indeed, your Excellency. One of thy staff—I know not his name, but the one who questioned dad-da—was vastly polite, and gave his room to us."

"That was Colonel Brereton,—the beau of my family. Look at him there! Wouldst think the coxcomb was in the charge this morning?"

Janice, for the first time, found courage to raise her eyes and glance along what to her seemed a sea of men's faces, till they settled on the person Washington indicated. Then she gave so loud an exclamation of surprise that every one looked at her. Conscious of this, she was once more seized with stage fright, and longed to slip from her chair and hide herself under the table.

"What startled thee, my child?" asked the general.

"Oh—he—nothing—" she gasped. "Who—what didst thou say was his name?"

"John Brereton."

"Oh!" was all Janice replied, as she drew a long breath.

"'T will ne'er do to let him know you've honoured him by particular notice," remarked the commander; "for both at Boston and New York the ladies have pulled caps for him to such an extent that 't is like he 'll grow so fat with vanity that he 'll soon be unable to sit his horse."

"Is — is he a Virginian, your Excellency?"

"No. 'T is thought he 's English."

Janice longed to ask more questions, but did not dare, and as the bottle passed, the conversation became general, permitting her to become a listener. When the moment came for the ladies to withdraw, she followed her mother.

"Oh, mommy!" she said the instant she could, "didst recognise Charles?"

"Charles! What Charles?"

"Charles Fownes — our bond-servant — Colonel Brereton."

"Nonsense, child! What maggot idea hast thee got now?"

"'T is he truly — and I never thought he could be handsome. But his being clean-shaven and wearing a wig —"

"No more of thy silly clack!" ordered her mother. "A runaway bond-servant on his Excellency's staff, quotha! Though he does head the rebels, General Washington is a man of breeding and would never allow that."

Before the men rose from the table the ladies were joined by Washington and Mr. Meredith.

"I have already expressed my regrets to your husband, Mrs. Meredith," said the general, "that a suspicion against him should have put you all to such material discomfort, and I desire to repeat them to you. Yet however greatly I mourn the error for your sake, for my own it is somewhat balanced by the pleasure you have afforded me by your company. Indeed, 't is with a certain regret that I received Colonel Brereton's report, which, by completely exonerating Mr. Meredith, is like to deprive us of your presence."

"Your Excellency is over-kind," replied Mrs. Meredith, with an ease that excited the envy of her daughter.

"The general has ordered his barge for us, my dear," said the squire, "and 't is best that we get across the river while there's daylight, if we hope to be back at Greenwood by to-morrow evening."

Farewells were promptly made, and, under the escort of Major Gibbs, they set out for the river. Once in the boat, Janice launched into an ecstatic eulogium on the commander-in-chief.

"Ay," assented Mr. Meredith; "the general's a fine man in bad company. 'T is a mortal shame to think he's like to come to the gallows."

"Dadda! No!"

"Yes. They put a bold face on 't, but after yesterday's defeat they can't hold the island another week; and when they lose it the rebellion is split, and that's an end to 't. 'T will be all over in a month, mark me."

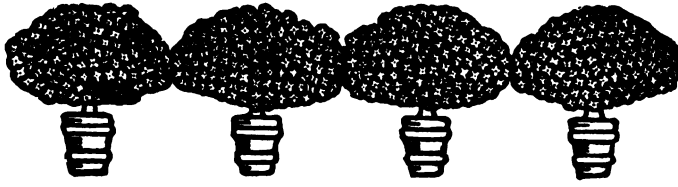
Janice pulled a very serious face for a moment, and then asked: "Didst notice Colonel Brereton, dadda?"

"Ay. And a polite man he is. He not merely had us released, but I have in my pocket a protection from the general he got for me."

"Didst not recognise him?"

"Recognise? Who? What?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Janice.



XXV

FREEDOM IN RETROGRADE

THE departure of the Merediths for headquarters under arrest had set Brunswick agog, and all sorts of surmises as to their probable guilt and fate had given the gossips much to talk of; their return, three days later, not merely unpunished, but with a protection from the commander-in-chief, set the village clacks still more industriously at work.

Events were moving so rapidly, however, that local affairs were quickly submerged. News of Washington's abandonment of the island of New York and retreat into Westchester, pursued by Howe's army, of the capture of Fort Washington and its garrison, of the evacuation of Fort Lee, of the steady dwindling of the Continental Army by the expiration of the terms of enlistment, and still more by wholesale desertions, reached the little community in various forms. But interesting though all this was for discussion at the tavern of an evening, or to fill in the vacant hour between the double service on a Sunday, it was still too distant to seem quite real, and so the stay-at-home farmers peacefully completed the getting in of their harvests, while the housewives baked and spun as of yore, both conscious of the conflict more through the gaps in the village society, caused by the absences of their more belligerently inclined neighbours, than from the actual clash of war.

The absent ones, it is needless to say, were the doughty warriors of the "Invincibles," who had been called into service along with the rest of the New Jersey militia when Howe's fleet had anchored in the bay of New York three months before, and who had since formed part of the troops defending the towns of Amboy and Elizabethport, but a few miles

away, from the possible descent of the British forces lying on Staten Island. This arrangement not only spared them from all active service, thus saving the parents and wives of Brunswick from serious anxiety, but also permitted frequent home visits, with or without furlough, thus supplying the town with its chief means of news.

An end came, however, to this period of quiet. Early in November vague rumours, growing presently to specific statements, told the villagers that their day was approaching. The British troops on Staten Island were steadily reinforced; the small boats of the line-of-battle ships and frigates were gathered opposite Amboy and Paulus Hook; large supplies of forage and cattle were massed at various points. Everything betokened an intended descent of the royal army into New Jersey; that the new-made State was to be baptised with blood.

The successive defeats of the Continental army wonderfully cooled many of the townspeople who but a few months before had vigorously applauded and saluted the glowing lines of the Declaration of Independence, when it had been read aloud to them by the Rev. Mr. McClave. One of the first evidences of this alteration of outward manner, if not of inward faith, was shown in the sudden change adopted by the community toward the household of Greenwood. When the squire had departed in custody he apparently possessed not one friend in Brunswick, but within a month of his return the villagers, the parson excepted, were making bows to him, in the growing obsequiousness of which might be inferred the growing desperation of the Continental cause. Yet another indication was the appearance of certain of the "Invincibles," who came straggling sheepishly into town one by one — "Just ter see how all the folks wuz" — and who, for reasons they kept more private, failed to rejoin their company after having satisfied their curiosity. Most incriminating of all, however, was the return of Bagby from the session of the Legislature then being held in Princeton, and his failure to go to Amboy to take command of his once gloried-in company.

"'T would n't be right to take the ordering away from Zerubbabel just when there's a chance for fighting, after he's

done the work all summer," was the captain's explanation of his conduct; and though his townsmen may have suspected another motive, they were all too bent on staying at home themselves, and were too busy taking in sail on the possibility of having to go about on another tack, to question his reasons.

If the mountain would not go, Mahomet would come; and one evening late in November, while the wind whistled and the rain beat outside the "Continental Tavern," as it was now termed, the occupants of the public room suddenly ceased from the plying of glasses and pipes, upon the hurried entrance of a man.

"The British is comin'!" he bellowed, bringing every man to his feet by the words.

"How does yer know?" demanded Squire Hennion.

"I wuz down ter the river ter see if my boat wuz tied fast enuf ter stand the blow an' I hearn the tramp of snogers comin' across the bridge."

"The bridge!" shouted Bagby. "Then they must be — Swamp it! there is n't more than time enough to run."

Clearly he spoke truly, for even as he ended his sentence the still unclosed door was filled by armed men. A cry of terror broke from the tavern frequenters, but in another moment this was exchanged for others of relief and welcome, when man after man entered and proved himself to be none other than an invincible.

"How, now, Leftenant Buntling?" demanded Bagby, in an attempt to regain his dignity. "What is the meaning of this return without orders?"

"The British landed a swipe o' men at Amboy this mornin', makin' us fall back mighty quick ter Bonumtown, an' there, arter the oficers confabulated, it wuz decided thet as the bloody-backs wuz too strong ter fight, the militia and the flyin' camp thereabouts hed better go home an' look ter their families. An' so we uns come off with the rest."

"You mean to say," asked Joe, "that you did n't strike one blow for freedom; did n't fire one shot at the tools of the tyrant?"

"Oh, cut it, Joe," growled one of the privates. "Thet 'ere

talk duz fer the tavern and fer election times, but 't ain't worth a darn when ye 've marched twenty miles on an empty stomick. Set the drinks up fer us, or keep quiet."

"That I will for you all," responded Bagby, "and what's more, the whole room shall tipple at my expense."

No more drinks were ordered, however; for a second time the occupants of the room were startled by the door being thrown open quickly to give entrance to a man wrapped in a riding cloak, but whose hat and boots both bespoke the officer.

"Put your house in readiness for General Washington and his staff, landlord," the new-comer ordered sharply. "They will be here shortly, and will want supper and lodgings." He turned in the doorway and called: "Get firewood from where you can, Colonel Hand, and kindle beacon fires at both ends of the bridge, to light the waggons and the rest of the forces; throw out patrols on the river road both to north and south, and quarter your regiment in the village barns." Then he added in a lower voice to a soldier who stood holding a horse at the door: "Put Janice in the church shed, Spalding; rub her down, and see to it that she gets a measure of oats and a bunch of fodder." He turned and strode to the fire, his boots squelching as he walked, as if in complaint at their be-soaked condition. Hanging his hat upon the candle hook on one side of the chimney breast and his cloak on the other, he stood revealed a well-dressed officer, in the uniform of a Continental colonel.

It had taken the roomful a moment to recover their equi-poise after the fright, but now Squire Hennion spoke up:

"So yer retreatin' some more, hey?"

The officer, who had been facing the fire in an evident attempt to dry and warm himself, faced about sharply: "Retreat!" he answered bitterly. "Can you do anything else with troops who won't fight; who in the most critical moment desert by fifties, by hundreds, ay, by whole regiments? Six thousand men have left us since we crossed into Jersey. A brigade of your own troops — of the State we had come to fight for — left us yesterday morning, when news came that Cornwallis was advancing upon our position at Newark. What can we do but retreat?"

"Well, may I be dummed!" ejaculated Bagby, "if it is n't Squire Meredith's runaway bondsman, and dressed as fine as a fivepence!"

The officer laughed scornfully. "Ay," he assented. "'T is the fashion of the land to run away, so 't is only *à la mode* that bondsmen and slaves should imitate their betters."

"Yer need n't mount us Americans so hard, seein' as yer took mortal good care ter git in the front ranks of them as wuz retreatin'," asserted an Invincible.

"I undertook to guide the retreat, because I knew the roads of the region," retorted the officer, hotly, evidently stung by the remark; then he laughed savagely and continued: "And how comes it, gentlemen all, that you are not gloriously serving your country? Cornwallis, with nine thousand picked infantry, is but a twenty miles to the northward; Knyphausen and six thousand Hessians landed at Perth Amboy this morning, and would have got between us and Philadelphia but for our rapid retreat. Canst sit and booze yourself with flip and swizzle when there are such opportunities for valour? Hast forgotten the chorus you were for ever singing?" Brereton sang out with spirit:—

" 'In Freedom we're born, and, like Sons of the Brave,
We'll never surrender,
But swear to defend her,
And scorn to survive, if unable to save.' "

"'Tain't no good fighting when we hav'n't a general," snarled Bagby.

"Now damn you for a pack of dirty, low-minded curs!" swore the officer, his face blazing with anger. "Here you've a general who is risking life, and fortune, and station; and then you blame him because he cannot with a handful of raw troops defeat thirty thousand regulars. There's not a general in Europe—not the great Frederick himself—who'd so much as have tried to make head against such odds, much less have done so much with so little. After a whole summer's campaign what have the British to show? They've gained the territory within gunshot of their fleet; but at White Plains, though they were four to one, they dared not attack us, and valiantly turned tail about, preferring to overrun unde-

fended country to assaulting our position. I tell you General Washington is the honestest, bravest, most unselfish man in the world, and you are a pack of—"

"Are my quarters ready, Colonel Brereton?" asked a tall man, standing in the doorway.

"This way, yer Excellency," obsequiously cried the landlord, catching up a candle and coming out from behind the bar. "I've set apart our settin'-room and our bestest room—thet 'ere with the tester bed—for yer honourable Excellency."

"Come with me, Colonel Brereton," ordered the general, as he followed the publican.

Motioning the tavern-keeper out of the room, Washington threw aside his wet cloak and hat, and taking from a pocket what looked like a piece of canvas, he unfolded and spread it out on the table, revealing a large folio map of New Jersey.

"You know the country," he said; "show me where the Raritan can be forded."

"Here, here, and here," replied Brereton, indicating with his finger the points. "But this rain to-night will probably so swell it that there 'll be no crossing for come a two days."

"Then if we destroy the bridge Cornwallis cannot cross for the present?"

"No, your Excellency. But if 't is their policy to again try to outflank us, they 'll send troops from Staten Island by boat to South Amboy; and by a forced march through Monmouth they can seize Princeton and Trenton, while Cornwallis holds us here."

"'T is evident, then, that we can make no stand except at the Delaware, should they seek to get in our rear. Orders must be sent to secure all the boats in that river, and to—"

A knock at the door interrupted him, and in reply to his "Come in," an officer entered, and, saluting, said hurriedly: "General Greene directs me to inform your Excellency that word has reached him that a brigade of the New Jersey militia have deserted and have seized and taken with them the larger part of the baggage train. The commissary reports that the stores saved will barely feed the forces one day more."

Washington stood silent for a moment. "I will send a message back to General Greene by you presently. In the meantime join my family, who are supping, Major Williams." Then, when the officer had left the room, the commander sat down at the table and rested his head on his hand, as if weary. "Such want of spirit and fortitude, such disaffection and treachery, show the game to be pretty well up," he muttered to himself.

Brereton who had fallen back at the entrance of the aide, once more came to the table. "Your Excellency," he said, "we are but losing the fair-weather men, who are really no help, and what is left will be tried troops and true."

"Left to starve!"

"This is a region of plenty. But give me the word, and in one day I'll have beef and corn enough to keep the army for a three months."

"They refuse to sell for Continental money."

"Then impress."

"It must come to that, I fear. Yet it will make the farmers enemies to the cause."

"No more than they are now, I wot," sneered the aide. "And if you leave them their crops 't will be but for them to sell to the British. 'T is a war necessity."

Washington rose, the moment's discouragement already conquered and his face set determinedly. "Give orders to Hazlett and Hand to despatch foraging parties at dawn, to seize all cattle, pigs, corn, wheat, or flour they may find, save enough for the necessities of the people, and to impress horses and wagons in which to transport them. Then join us at supper."

Brereton saluted, and turned, but as he did so Washington again spoke:—

"I overheard what you were saying in the public room, Brereton," he said. "Some of my own aides are traducing me in secret, and making favour with other generals by praising them and criticising me, against the possibility that I may be superseded. But I learned that I have one faithful man."

"Ah, your Excellency," impulsively cried the young officer,

starting forward, " 't is a worthless life, — which brought disgrace to mother, to father, and to self ; but what it is, is yours."

" Thank you, my boy," replied Washington, laying his hand affectionately on Brereton's shoulder. " As you say, 't is a time which winnows the chaff from the wheat. I thank God He has sent some wheat to me." And there were tears in the general's eyes as he spoke.



XXVI

NECESSITY KNOWS NO LAWS

WHILE the family of Greenwood were still at the breakfast-table on the following morning, they were startled by a shriek from the kitchen, and then by Peg and Sukey bursting into the room where they sat.

"Oh, marse," gasped the cook, "de British!"

Both the squire and Janice sprang to the windows, to see a file of soldiers, accompanied by a mounted officer, drawn up at the rear of the house. As they took this in, the line broke into squads, one of which marched toward the stable, a second toward the barn, while the third disappeared round the corner of the house. With an exclamation the squire hurried to the kitchen and intrenched himself in the door just as the party reached it.

"Who are ye, and by what right do ye trespass on my property?" he demanded.

"Git out of the way, ole man," ordered the sergeant. "We hev orders ter take a look at yer store-room and cellar, an' we ha'n't got no time to argify."

"Ye'll not get into my cellar, that I can tell —" began the squire; but his remark ended in a howl of pain, as the officer dropped the butt of his musket heavily on the squire's toes. The agony was sufficient to make the owner of Greenwood collapse into a sitting position on the upper step and fall to nursing the injured member.

Janice, who had followed her father into the kitchen, sprang forward with a cry of sympathy and fright, just as the mounted officer, who had heard the squire's yell, came trotting round the corner.

"No violence, sergeant!" he called sternly.

"Not a bit, sir," replied the aggressor. "One of the boys happened ter drop his muskit on the old gentleman's corns, an' I was apologisin' fer his carelessness."

"You dreadful liar!" cried Janice, hotly, turning from her attempted comforting of the squire. "He did it on—oh!" She abruptly ended her speech as the mounted officer uncovered and bowed to her, and the "Oh!" was spoken as she recognised him. "Charles—Colonel Brereton!" the girl exclaimed.

"Charles!" exclaimed Mrs. Meredith, coming to the door. "Hoighty toighty, if it is n't!"

"I am very sorry that we are compelled to impress food, Mrs. Meredith," said the aide; "but as it is useless to resist I trust you will not make the necessity needlessly unpleasant."

"Ye 're a pack of ruffians and thieves!" cried the squire.

"Nay, Mr. Meredith," answered the aide, quietly; "we pay for it."

"In paper money that won't be worth a penny in the pound, come a month."

"That remains to be seen," responded the officer.

"'Tis quite of a piece that a runaway redemptioner should return with other thieves and rob his master!" fumed the owner of Greenwood.

Brereton grew red, and retorted: "I am not in command of this force, and rode out with them at some sacrifice to save you from possible violence or unnecessary discomfort. Since you choose to insult me, I will not remain. Do your duty, sergeant," was the officer's parting injunction as he wheeled his horse and started toward the road.

"Stick him with yer bagonet, Pelatiah," ordered the sergeant, motioning toward the squire, who, still sitting in the doorway, very effectually blocked the way. Pelatiah, duly obedient, pricked the well-developed calf of the master of Greenwood, bringing that individual to his feet with another howl, which drew sympathetic shrieks from Mrs. Meredith and Janice.

Evidently the cries made it impossible for Colonel Brereton to hold to his intention, for he once again turned his horse

and came riding back. By the time he reached the door the squire had been shoved to one side, and the men could be heard ransacking the larder and cellar none too quietly.

"Though you slight my services," the aide explained, "I'll bide for the present."

Meanwhile the parties that had been detached to the other points could be seen harnessing oxen and horses to the hay cart, farm waggons, and even the big coach, and loading them from the corn-crib and barn. Presently the cortège started for the house, and here more stores of various kinds were loaded.

During the whole of this operation the squire kept busily expressing his opinions of the proceedings of the foragers, of the army to which they belonged, and of the Continental cause generally, which, but for the presence of the staff officer, would have probably led to his ducking in the horse trough, or to some other expression of the party's displeasure.

"I see ye take good care to steal all my horses, so that I shall not be able to ride to Brunswick and report ye to the commander," he railed, just as the last armful of hams and sides of bacon was thrown into the coach. "We heard tales of how ye robbed and plundered about York, unbeknownst to the general, and I've no doubt ye are thieving now without his knowledge."

"If you want to get to Brunswick you shall have a lift," offered the aide. "We'll drive you there, and I'll see to it that you have a horse to bring you back."

"Ay. And leave my wife and daughter to be outraged by you villainous Whigs."

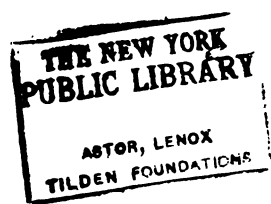
Again Brereton lost his temper. "I challenge you to prove one case of our army insulting a woman," he cried. "And hast heard of the doings of the last few days? Of the conduct of British soldiers to the women of Hackensack and Elizabethtown, or of the brutality of the Hessians at Rahway? At this very moment Mr. Collins is printing for us broadsides of the affidavits of the poor miserable victims, in the hopes that we can rouse the country by them."

"'Tis nothing but a big Whig clanker, I'll be bound!" snorted Mr. Meredith.

"I would for the sake of manhood they were!" said the



“The men could be heard ransacking the larder and cellar none too quietly.”



officer. "I was once proud to be a British soldier—" he checked himself sharply, and then went on: "If you fear for Mrs. Meredith and Miss Janice, take them with you. I'll see to it that you all return in comfort."

Although the squire had no particular fear of the safety of his womankind, he did not choose to confess it after what he had said; and so, without more ado, his wife and daughter were ordered to don their calashes and cloaks. Then the odd-looking caravan, of five vehicles, nine cows, and four squealing pigs, started,—Mrs. Meredith and Janice and the squire seated on the box of the coach, while the driver bestrode one of the horses.

The excitement of the drive was delightful to Janice, and it was not lessened by what she heard. The aide rode beside the coach, and at first tried to engage her in conversation, but the girl was too shy and self-conscious to talk easily to him, and so it ended in chat between the officer and Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, in which he told of how he had secured his position on the staff of the general, and gave an outline history of the siege of Boston, the campaigning about New York, and the retreat to Brunswick.

"I knew the rake-hells 'ud never fight," asserted the squire, at one point.

"Like all green troops, they object to discipline, and have shown cowardice in the face of the enemy. But the British would not dare say as much as you say, after the lessons they've had. The fault is mainly with the officers, who, by the system of election or appointment, are chiefly politicians and popularity-seekers not fit to black boots, much less command companies and regiments. Here in this town, the life was sapped out of the 'Invincibles' by their own officers; but the parson went among the men this morning, and the best of them formed a new company under him and enlisted for the year. And those who helped me take the powder to Cambridge volunteered, and have proved good men. All they need are good officers to make them good soldiers."

"What did ye with that rogue Evatt?" demanded the squire, his mind recalled to the subject by the allusion to the powder; and Janice hastily caught hold of the fore-string of

her calash to pull the headgear forward so that her face should be hidden from the aide. Yet she listened to the reply with an attentive if red face.

"Our kidnapping of him not being easy to justify, I did not choose to take him to Cambridge and so, when we spoke a brig outside Newport, bound for Madeira, I e'en bargained his passage on her. 'Tis naturally the last I ever heard of him."

Then poor Janice had to hear her father and mother express their thanks to the officer and berate the runaway pair; and the painful subject was abandoned only when they drove into Brunswick, where its interest could not compete with that of the masses of soldiers camped on the green, the batteries of artillery planted along the river front, and the general hurly-burly everywhere.

"You had best sit where you are, ladies," the aide remarked, "for the inn is full of men;" and the two accepted his suggestion, and from their coign of vantage surveyed the scene, while the squire, tumbling off the waggon, demanded word with the commander-in-chief.

"I'll tell him you wish speech with him," said Brereton, dismounting and going into the tavern.

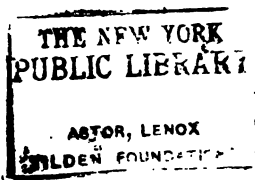
It is only human when one is in misery to take a certain satisfaction in finding that misfortune is not a personal monopoly. While the squire waited to pour out his complaint, he found farmer after farmer standing about with similar intent; and, greatly comforted by the grievances of his neighbors, he became almost joyous when Squire Hennion, following a long line of carts loaded with his year's harvest, added himself to the scene, and with oaths and wails sought in turn to express his anger and misery.

"Tew rob a genuine Son o' Liberty," he whined, "ez hez allus stood by the cause! The general shall hear o' 't. I'm ruined. I'll starve. I'll—"

"Ho, ho!" laughed Mr. Meredith, heartily. "So sitting on both sides don't pay, eh? And a good serve out it is to ye, ye old trimmer. What! object to paper dollars, when ye are so warm a Whig? What if they are only worth two shillings in the pound, specie? Liberty for ever! Ho, ho! This is worth the trip to Brunswick alone."



“ ‘ I ’ e ’ n bargained his passage on ber. ’ ”



Colonel Brereton came out of the tavern with a paper in his hand, and called the squire aside.

"Mr. Meredith," he said in a low voice, his face eager, yet worn with anxiety, "I find that since I left camp this morning the rest of the New Jersey and all of the Maryland flying camps have refused to stay, and have left us, though Cornwallis's advance is at Piscataway, and as he is pushing forward by forced marches he will reach the Raritan within two hours."

"No doubt, no doubt," assented the squire, gleefully. "Another week will put him in Philadelphia, and then ye rebels will dance for it. No wonder ye look frightened, man."

"I am not scared on my own account," replied the officer, bitterly. "A dozen bullets, whether in battle or standing blindfold against a white wall, are all the same to me. I'll take the gallows itself, if it comes, and say good quittance."

"Ay," grunted Mr. Meredith, "go on. Tip us a good touch of the heroics."

The aide smiled, but then went on anxiously: "But what I do fear, and why I tell you what I do, is for — for — for Mrs. Meredith and — The loss of this force leaves us barely three thousand men to fight Cornwallis's and Knyphausen's fifteen thousand. We shall burn the bridge within the hour, but that will scarce check them, and so we must retreat to the Delaware."

"And how does this affect me?"

"Every hour brings us word of the horrible excesses of the British soldiery. No woman seems safe from — For God's sake, Mr. Meredith, don't remain here! But go with our army, and I'll pledge you my word you shall be safe and as comfortable as it is in my power to make you."

"Tush! British officers never —"

"T is not the officers, but the common soldiers who straggle from the lines for plunder and — while the pigs of Hessians and Waldeckers, sold by their princes at so much per head, cannot be controlled, even by their own officers. See, here, is the broadside of which I spoke. I have seen every affidavit, and swear to you that they are genuine. Don't — you can't risk such a fate for Mrs. Meredith or —" Brereton stopped,

unable to say more, and thrust the paper he held in his hand into that of the squire.

"I'll have none of your Whig lies puffed on me!" persisted the squire, obstinately.

The officer started to argue; but as he did so the gallop of a horse's feet was heard, and Colonel Laurens came dashing up. Throwing himself from the saddle, he flung into the tavern; and that he brought important news was so evident that Brereton hurriedly left Mr. Meredith and followed. Barely a moment passed when aide after aide issued from the inn, and, mounting, spurred away in various directions. The results were immediate. The carts were hurriedly put in train and started southward on the Princeton post-road, smoke began to rise from the bridge, the batteries limbered up, and the regiments on the green fell in and then stood at ease.

While these obvious preparations for a retreat were in progress a coloured man appeared, leading so handsome and powerful a horse that Janice, who had much of her father's taste, gave a cry of pleasure and, jumping from her perch, went forward to stroke the beast's nose.

"What a beauty!" she cried.

"Yes, miss, dat Blueskin," replied the darky, grinning proudly. "He de finest horse from de Mount Vernon stud, but he great villain, jus' de same. He so obstropolus when he hear de guns dat the gin'l kian't use him, an' has tu ride ole Nelson when dyars gwine tu be any fightin'."

Janice leaned forward and kissed the "great villain" on his soft nose, and then turned to find the general standing in the doorway watching her.

"I have not time to attend to your complaints, gentlemen," he announced to the two esquires and the group of farmers, all of whom started forward at his appearance. "File your statements and claims with the commissary-general, and in due time they'll receive attention." Then he came toward his horse, and as he recognised the not easily forgotten face he uncovered. "I trust Miss Janice remembers me!" he said, a smile succeeding the careworn look of the previous moment, and added: "Had ye been kind, ye'd have kept that caress for the master."

Janice coloured, but replied with a mixture of assurance and shyness: "Blueskin could not ask for it, but your Excellency —" Then she paused and coloured still more.

Washington laughed, and, stooping, kissed her hand. "Being a married man, must limit the amount of his yielding to temptation," he said, finishing the sentence for the girl. "I would I were to have the honour of your company at dinner once more, but your friends, the British, will not give us the time. So I must mount and say farewell."

Janice turned an eager face up to the general, as he swung himself into the saddle. "Oh, your Excellency," she exclaimed below her breath, "dadda would think it very wicked of me, but I hope you'll beat them!"

Washington's face lighted up, and, leaning over, he once more kissed her hand. "Thank you for the wish, my child," he said, and, giving Blueskin the spur, rode toward the river.

"If Philemon was only like his Excellency!" thought the girl.



XXVII

A CHECK TO THE ENEMY

THERE followed a weary hour of waiting, while first the carts, then the artillery, and finally the few hundred ill-clad, weary men filed off on the post-road. Before the rear-guard had begun its march, British regiments could be discerned across the river, and presently a battery came trotting down to the opposite shore, and a moment later the guns were in position to protect a crossing. This accomplished, a squadron of light dragoons rode into the water and struck boldly across, a number of boats setting out at the same moment, each laden with redcoats. While they were yet in mid-stream the Continental bugles sounded the retreat, and the last American regiment marched across the green and disappeared from view.

Owing to the fact that the coach had not been parked with the waggons, but had been brought to the tavern door, the baggage-train had moved off without it, — a circumstance, needless to say, which did not sadden the squire. It so happened that the vehicle had stopped immediately under the composite portrait sign-board of the inn ; and no sooner was the last American regiment lost to view than the publican appeared, equipped with a paint-pot and brush, and, muttering an apology to the owner of the coach, now seated beside his wife and daughter on the box, he climbed upon the roof and, by a few crude strokes, altered the lettering from "Gen. George the Good" into "King George the Good." But he did not attempt to change the firm chin and the strong forehead the bondsman had added to the face.

Barely was the operation finished when the British light horse came wading out of the water and cantered up the river



"A squadron of light dragoons rode into the water and struck boldly across."

road to the green, the uniforms and helmets flashing brilliantly, the harness jingling, and the swords clanking merrily.

"There are troops worth talking about," cried the squire, enthusiastically.

He spoke too quickly, for the moment the "dismount" sounded, twenty men were about the coach.

"Too good horses for a damned American!" shouted one, and a dozen hands were unharnessing them on the instant. "A load of prog, boys!" gleefully shouted a second, and both doors were flung open, and the soldiers were quickly crowding each other in their endeavours to get a share. "Egad!" announced another, "but I'll have a tousel and a buss from yon lass on the box." "Well said!" cried a fourth, and both sprang on the wheel, as a first step to the attainment of their wishes.

Mr. Meredith, from the box, had been shrieking affirmations of his loyalty to King George without the slightest heed being paid to him; but there is a limit to passivity, and as the two men on the wheel struggled which should first gain the desired prize, the squire kicked out twice with his foot in rapid succession, sending both disputants back into the crowd of troopers. Howls of rage arose on all sides; and it would have fared badly with the master of Greenwood had not the noise brought an officer up.

"Here, here!" he cried sharply, "what's all this pother about?"

"'T is a damned Whig, who is —"

"A lie!" roared the squire. "There is no better subject of King George living than Lambert Meredith."

The officer jeered. "That's what every rebel claims of late. Not one breathes in the land, if you'd but believe the words of you turncoats."

"'T is not a lie," spoke up Janice, her face blazing with temper and her fists clinched as if she intended to use them. "Dadda always —"

"Ho!" exclaimed the officer, "what a pretty wench! Art a rebel, too? for if so, I'll see to it that guard duty falls to me. Come, black eyes, one kiss, and I'll send the men to right about."

Janice caught the whip from its socket and raised it threateningly, just as another officer from a newly arrived company came spurring up and, without warning, began to strike right and left with the flat of his sword. "Off with you, you damned rascallions!" he shouted. "Leftenant Bromhead, where are your manners?"

"And where are yours, Mr. Hennion, that ye dare speak so to your superior officer?" demanded the lieutenant.

There was no mistaking Philemon, changed though he was. He wore a fashionable wig, and his clothes fitted well a figure that, once shambling and loose-jointed, had now all the erectness of the soldier, but the face was unchanged.

"I'll not quarrel with you now," swaggered Philemon. "If you want ter fight later I'm your man, an' if you want ter go before Colonel Harcourt with a complaint I'll face you. But now I've other matters." He turned to the trio on the box, and exclaimed as he doffed his hat: "Well, squire, didst ever expect sight of me again? An' how do Mrs. Meredith and Janice? Strap my vitals, if I've seen such beauty since I left Brunswick," he added airily, and making Janice feel very much put out of countenance.

"Welcome, Philemon!" cried Mrs. Meredith, "and doubly welcome at such a moment."

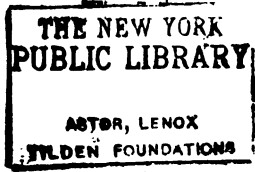
"Ay," shouted the squire, heartily. "Ye arrived just in the nick o' time to save your bride, Phil." A remark which sent the whip rattling to the ground from the hands of Janice. "An' ye a king's officer!" he ended. "Bubble your story to us, lad."

"There ain't much ter tell as you don't know already. Sir William put no faith in the news I carried, thinkin' it but a Whig trick, and so they held me prisoner. But later, when 't was too late ter use it, they learned the word I brought them was true; so they set me free, and as there was no gettin' away from Boston, the general gave me a cornetcy, that I should not starve."

"I'll lay to it that there'll be no more starvation now that you're back home," cried the squire, "though betwixt your cheating old sire, who'll pay no interest on his mortgages, and the merchants gone bankrupt in York, and now this loss



"The non commissioned officers shouted summons to take the oath of allegiance to King George the Third."



of harvest and stock, 't is like Greenwood will show but a lean larder for a time. But mayhaps now that ye've gone up in the world, ye'd like to cry off from the bargain?"

"But let me finish the campaign by capturin' Philadelphia, and dispersin' Washington's pack of peddlers and jail-birds, which won't take mor'n a fortnight, and then you can't name a day too soon for me, an' I hope not for your daughter. You can't call me gawk any longer, I reckon, Janice?"

"Thou camst nigh to losing her, Phil," declared Mrs. Meredith.

"Ay," added the squire. "Hast heard of how that scoundrel Evatt schemed —"

"Oh, dadda!" moaned Janice, imploringly.

"No scoundrel is he, squire, nor farmer neither; he bein' Lord Clowes," asserted Phil. "He joined our army at New York, and is Sir William's commissary-general an' right-hand man."

A more effectual interruption than that of the girl's prevented Mr. Meredith from enlarging upon the theme, for the bugle sounded in quick succession the "assembly" and "boots and saddles."

"That calls me," announced Phil, with an air of importance. "We ain't goin' ter give the runaways no rest, you see."

"But Phil," cried the squire, "ye'll not leave us to be again — And they've stole Joggles and Jumper, and all my hams and sides. Ye must —"

"I can't bide now," called back the cornet, hurriedly taking his position just as the bugle called the marching order, and the squadron moved off after the retreating Continentals.

Helpless to move, the Merediths sat on their coach while an officer, accompanied by a file of soldiers and half a dozen drummers, took station at the Town Hall. First a broadside was posted on the bulletin-board, and the drums beat the "parley" long and loudly. Then the drummers and the file split into two parties, and marching down the village street in opposite directions, the non-commissioned officers, to the beat of drum, shouted summons to all the population to assemble at the hall to take the oath of allegiance to "King George the Third, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth."

The first man to step forward to take the oath, sign the submission, and receive his pardon was the Hon. Joseph Bagby, erstwhile member of the Assembly of New Jersey, but now loudly declaring his loyalty to the crown, and his joy that "things were to be put in order again." The second signer was the publican; the third was Esquire Hennion; and after him came all the townsmen, save those who had thrown in their lot along with the parson that morning by marching off with Washington.

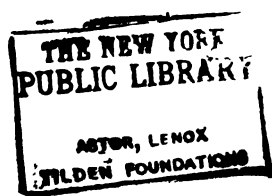
Mr. Meredith descended from his seat and waited his turn to go through what was to him a form, and during this time the ladies watched the troops being ferried across the river. Presently an officer rode up the river road, issuing orders to the regiments, which promptly fell in, while the rider halted at the tavern, announced the soon-to-be-expected arrival of Generals Howe and Cornwallis, and bade the landlord prepare his best cheer. While he spoke a large barge landed its burden of men and horses on the shore, and a moment later a dozen officers came trotting up to the tavern between lines of men with their guns at "present arms."

"What ho! Well met, friend Meredith," cried one of the new-comers, as the group halted at the tavern. "I was but just telling Sir William that the king had one good friend in Brunswick town, and now here he is!" Evatt, or Clowes, swung out of the saddle and extended his hand.

Although the squire had just recovered the whip dropped by Janice, he did not keep to his intention of laying it across the shoulders of the would-be abductor, but instead grasped the hand offered.

"Well met, indeed," he assented cordially. "'Tis a glad sight to us to see our good king's colours and troops."

"Sir William," called the baron, "thou must know Mr. Lambert Meredith, first, because he's the one friend our king has in this town, and next, because, as thy commissary, I forbid thee to dine at the tavern on the vile fried pork or bubble and squeak, and the stinking whiskey or rum thou'lt be served with, and, in Mr. Meredith's name, invite thee and his Lordship to eat a dinner at Greenwood, where thou'lt have the best of victuals, washed down with Madeira fit for Bacchus."



"Ay," cried Mr. Meredith, "the rebels have done their best to bring famine to Greenwood, but it shall spread its best to any of his Majesty's servants."

"Here's loyalty indeed," said Sir William, heartily, as he leaned in his saddle to shake the squire's hand. "Damn your rebel submissions and oaths, not worth the paper they're writ on; but good Madeira, — that smacks loyal and true on a parched tongue and cannot swear false. Lead the way, Mr. Meredith, and we'll do as much justice to your wine as later we'll do to Mr. Washington, if we can ever come up with him. Eh, Charles?"

The officer addressed, who was frowning, gave an impatient movement in the saddle that seemed to convey dissent. "Of what use was our forced march," he demanded, "if not to come up with the fox before he finds cover?"

"Nay, the rebels are so little hampered by baggage that they can outstrip all save our light horse. And because they have the legs of us is no reason for our starving ourselves; the further they run, the more exhausted they'll be."

"Well argued," chimed in Clowes. "And your Excellency will find more at Greenwood than mere meat and drink. Come, squire, name your dame and Miss Janice to Sir William. In playing quadrille to win, man, we never hold back the queens."

All the horsemen uncovered to the ladies, as they were introduced, and Howe uttered an admiring epithet as his eyes fixed on the girl. "The Queen of Hearts scores, and the game is won," he cried, bowing low to Janice. "Ho, Charles, art as hot for the rebels as thou wert a moment since?"

"I still think the light horse had best be pushed, and should be properly supported by the grenadiers."

"Nay, wait till Knyphausen comes up, and then we'll —"

"'Tis no time to play a waiting game."

"Tush! Lord Cornwallis," replied Sir William, irritably. "The infantry have done their twenty miles to-day. I'll not jade my troops into the runaway state of the rebels. What use to kill our men, when the rebellion is collapsing of itself?" During all his argument the commander-in-chief kept his eyes fixed on Janice.

"I can't but think —" began the earl.

"Come, come, man," interjected Howe, "we mustn't let the Whigs beat us by starvation. Must we, eh, Mr. Meredith?"

"'T would be a sad end to all our hopes," assented the squire. "And while we have to do with the rebels, let me point out to ye the two most malignant in this town. There stand the precious pair who have done more to foment disloyalty than any other two men in the county." It is needless to say that Mr. Meredith was pointing at Squire Hennion and Bagby, who, more curiously than wisely, had lingered at the tavern.

"He lies!" and "'T ain't so!" shrieked Bagby and Hennion in unison, and each began protestations of loyalty, which were cut short by Sir William, who turned to Cornwallis and ordered the two under arrest, pending further information.

"Now we'll see justice," chuckled the master of Greenwood, gleefully. "If ye'll not pay interest on your debts, I'll pay interest on mine — ay, and with a hangman's cord belike."

"But I signed a submission and oath, and here's my pardon," protested Bagby, producing the paper, an example that Hennion imitated.

"Damn Campbell's carelessness!" swore Howe. "He deals pardons as he would cards at piquet, by twos, without so much as a look at their faces. A glance at either would have shown both to be rascalion Whigs. However, 't is done, and not to be undone. Release them, but keep eye on each, and if they give the slightest cause, to the guardhouse with them. Now, Mr. Meredith."

"I must ask your Excellency's assistance to horse my coach, and his Majesty owes me a pair not easy to match, stole by your troops this very morning."

"Make note of it, Mr. Commissary, and see to it that Mr. Meredith has the two returned, with proper compensation. And, Charles, if the theft can be fixed, let the men have a hundred stripes apiece. Unless a stop can be put to this plundering and raping, we'll have a second rebellion on our hands."

Cornwallis shrugged his shoulders and issued the necessary orders. Then horses being secured for the carriage, the

squire and dames, accompanied by the generals, set out for Greenwood.

It was long past the customary dining hour when the house was reached, and though Mrs. Meredith and Janice joined Sukey and Peg in the hurried preparation of the meal, it was not till after three that it could be announced. As a consequence, before the men had tired of the Madeira, dark had come. One unfortunate of the staff was therefore despatched to order the regiments to bivouac for the night.

"Tell the commissaries to issue an extra ration of rum," directed Sir William, made generously minded by the generous use of the wine. "And now, friend Lambert, let's have in the spirits, and if it but equal thy Madeira in quality we'll sing a Te Deum and make a night of it."

Janice, at a call from the host, brought in the squat decanters; and the general insisted, with a look which told his admiration, that his first glass should be mixed by the girl.

"Nay, nay," he cried, checking her as she reached for the loaf sugar. "Put it to thy lips, and 'twill be sweeter than any sugar can make it. Take but a sip and give us a toast along with it." And the general caught at the girl's free hand and tried to put his other arm about her waist.

"Oh, fie, Sir William!" called Clowes, too flushed with wine to guard his tongue. "What will Mrs. Loring think of such talk?"

"Think! Let her think what she may," retorted the general, with a laugh. "Dost thou not know that woman is never sweeter than when she is doubtful of her empire?"

Janice, with heightened colour and angry eyes, eluded Howe's familiarities by a backward step, and, raising the glass, defiantly gave, "Success to Washington!" Then, scared at her own temerity, she darted from the room, in her fright carrying away the tumbler of spirits. But she need not have fled, for her toast only called forth an uproarious burst of laughter.

"I always said 'twas a rebellion of petticoats," chuckled Sir William. "And small blame to them when they sought to tax their only drink. 'Fore George, I'd rebel myself if they went to taxing good spirits unfairly. Ah, gentlemen, after we have finished with Mr. Washington next week, what

sweet work 't will be to bring the caps to a proper submission ! No wonder Cornwallis is hot to push on and have done with the men."

The morrow found Sir William no less inclined to tarry than he had been the day before, and, using the plea that they would await the arrival of Knyphausen's force, he sent orders to the advance to remain bivouacked at Brunswick, much to the disgust of Cornwallis, who was little mollified by the consent he finally wrung from his superior to push forward the Light Horse on a reconnoissance, — a task on which he at once departed.

Thus rid of his disagreeable spur, the general settled down before the parlour fire to a game of piquet with Clowes, not a little to the scandalising of card-hating Mrs. Meredith. Worse still to the mother, nothing would do Sir William but for Janice to come and score for him, and it is to be confessed that his attention was more devoted to the black of her eyes and the red of her cheeks than it was to the same colours on the cards. Three times he unguarded a king in the minor hand, and twice he was capoted unnecessarily. As a result, the baron won easily; but the gain in purse did not seem to cheer him, for he looked discontented even as he pocketed his winnings. And as every gallant speech his commander made the girl had deepened this look, the cause for the feeling was not far to seek.

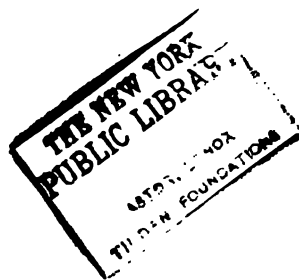
Dinner eaten, the general, without leaving the table, lapsed into gentle, if somewhat noisy, slumber; and his superior thus disposed of for the moment, Clowes sought Janice, only to find that two young fellows of the staff, having abandoned the bottle before him, had the longer been enjoying her society. He joined the group, but, as on the preceding evening, Janice chose to ignore his presence. What he did not know was something said before his entrance, which had much to do with the girl's determination to punish him.

"Who is this person who is so intimate with Sir William?" she had asked the staff secretary.

McKenzie gave his fellow-staffsman a quick glance which, manlike, he thought the girl would not perceive. "He's commissary-general of the forces," he then replied.



“Janice, raising the glass, defiantly gave ‘Success to Washington.’”



Janice shrugged her shoulders. "Thank you for enlightening my ignorance," she said ironically. "Let me add in payment for the information that this is a spinet."

Again McKenzie exchanged a look with Balfour. The latter, however, after a glance at the door, said, in a low voice: "He's no favourite with us; that you may be sure."

"He — Is he — Is Baron Clowes his true name?" Janice questioned.

"More true than most things about him," muttered McKenzie.

"Then he has another name?" persisted the girl.

"A half-dozen, no doubt," assented Balfour. "There are dirty things to be done in every kind of work, Miss Meredith, and there are always dirty men ready to do them. I'd not waste thought on him. Knaves go to make up a complete pack as much as kings, you know," he finished, as Lord Clowes entered the room.

Cornwallis returned at nightfall, with word of the junction of reinforcements; but, despite the news, it required all the urgency of himself and Clowes to induce the commander-in-chief to give the marching order for the next morning. Nor, when the hour of departure came, was Howe less reluctant, lingering over his adieux with his host and hostess, and especially with their daughter, to an extent which set the earl stamping with impatience and put a scowl on Clowes' face. Even when the general was in the saddle, nothing would do him but he must have a stirrup cup; and when this had been secured, he demanded another toast of the girl.

"You gave Mr. Washington your good wishes last time, Miss Janice, runaway though he was. Canst not give a toast for the troops that don't run?" he pleaded.

Janice, with a roguish look in her eyes that boded no good to the British, took the glass, and, touching it to her lips, said: "Here's to the army which never runs away, and which never —" Then she paused, and caught her breath as if wanting courage.

"Out with it! Complete the toast!" cried the general, eagerly.

"And which never runs after!" ended Janice.



XXVIII

THE EBB-TIDE

CLOWES lingered behind for a brief moment after the departure of Howe, in pretended desire to advise Mr. Meredith concerning the British policy about provisions and forage, but in truth to say a word of warning which proved that he already regretted having secured for his commander-in-chief the *entrée* of Greenwood.

"I heard Sir William say he'd bide with ye on his return from Philadelphia," the commissary told the squire in parting. "Have an eye to your girl, if he does. Though a married man, his Excellency is led off by every lacing-string that comes within reach."

The master of Greenwood privately thought that the precautionary advice as to his daughter might come with better grace from some other source; but both guest and host, for reasons best known to each, had tacitly agreed to ignore the past, and so the squire thanked his counsellor.

"Ye'll not forget to seek out my horses!" he added, when the commissary picked up his bridle.

"Assuredly not," promised Clowes. "How many didst say ye lost?"

"Two. All the Whig thieves left to me of the nine I had."

"Fudge, man! Say nothing of the Whig thieves, but lay them all to our account. We've plunderers in plenty in our own force, let alone the dirty pigs of Hessians, and King George shall pay for the whole nine."

"Nay, Lord Clowes, because I've been robbed, I'll not turn—" began the squire.

"What is more," went on the benevolently-inclined officer, "I will tell ye something that will be worth many a pound. 'Twas decided betwixt Sir William and myself that we should

seize all provisions and fodder throughout the province. But I need scarce say — ”

“ Surely, man, thou wilt do nothing as crazy as that,” burst out Mr. Meredith. “ Dost not see that it will make an enemy of every man, from one end — ”

“ Which they are already,” interrupted the baron, in turn. “ ’T is our method of bringing punishment home to the scamps. We ’ll teach them what rebellion comes to ere we have finished with them. But, of course, such order does not extend to my personal friends, and if ye have any fodder or corn, or anything else ye can spare, I will see to it that his Majesty buys it at prices that will more than make good to ye what ye lost through the rebels.”

The squire made a motion of dissent. “ The Whig rascals have swept my barn and storehouses so clean that I ’ll have to buy for my own needs, and — ”

“ Then buy what ye can hereabout before we begin seizing, and see to it that ye buy a good surplus which ye can sell to us at a handsome advance. Our good king is a good paymaster, and I ’ll show ye what it is to have a friend in the commissariat.” With this Clowes put spurs to his horse, confident that he had more than offset any prejudice against him that might still exist in Mr. Meredith’s mind. None the less, that individual stood for some moments on the porch with knitted brows, gazing after the departing horseman ; and when he finally turned to go into the house he gave a shake to his head that seemed to express dissatisfaction.

Although Mr. Meredith did not act upon the commissary’s suggestion in securing a supply of provisions, there was quickly no lack of food or forage at Greenwood. From the moment that Brunswick was occupied by the British, every one of Mr. Meredith’s tenants, who for varying periods had refused to pay rent, adopted a different course and wholly or in part settled up the arrears owing. Most of them first endeavoured to liquidate the claim in the Continental currency, now depreciated through the desperation of the American cause to a point that made it scarcely worth the paper on which its pseudo-value was stamped. The squire, however, with many a jeer and flout at each would-be payer for his folly in having

taken the money, and his still greater foolishness in expecting to pay rent on leaseholds with it, declined to accept it. His refusal of each tender, which indeed had been expected, was usually followed by a second offer of payment in the form of fodder or provisions, or "in kind," as the leases then expressed it; and the moment the rumour went through the community that the British were forcibly seizing provisions, every farmer hastened to save his entire surplus by paying it to his landlord.

Nothing better proved the hopeless outlook of the American cause than the conduct of Esquire Hennion, for that worthy rode to Greenwood, and after a vain attempt, like that of the tenants, to pay in the worthless paper money the arrears of interest on his mortgages, with a like refusal by Mr. Meredith, he completely broke down, and with snivels and wails besought his "dear ole friend" to be lenient and forbearing. "I made a mistake, squire," he pleaded; "but I allus liked yer, an' Phil he likes yer, an' naow yer're too ginerous ter push things too far, I knows."

"Huh!" grunted the creditor. "I said I'd make ye cry small, ye old trimmer. So it's no longer to your interest to pay principal, or your principle to pay interest, eh? No, I won't push ye too far! I'll only turn ye out of Boxely and let ye be farmed on the town as a pauper. If I had the dealing with ye, ye'd be in the provost prison at York awaiting trial as a traitor. And my generosity would run to just six feet of rope."

Of the tide of war only vague rumours came back to the non-combatants, until at noon, a week later, Sir William, accompanied by two aides and an escort of dragoons, came cantering up.

"In the king's name, dinner!" he cried cheerily, as he shook the welcoming hand of the squire. "You see, Mr. Meredith, we've forgot neither your loyalty nor your Madeira. No, nor your dainty lass, either; and so we are here again to levy taxation without representation on them all. 'Tis to be hoped, Mrs. Meredith, that 't will be met more kindly than our Parliamentary attempt at the same game. Ah, Miss Janice, your face is a pleasant sight to look at after the bleak

banks of the Delaware, at which we've been staring and cursing for the last five days."

"We hoped to hear of ye as in Philadelphia before this, Sir William," said the squire, so soon as they were seated at the table.

"Ay, and so did we all; but Mr. Washington was too quick and sharp for us. By the time we had reached Trenton, he had got safely across the river, and had taken with him or destroyed all the boats."

"Could ye not have forded the river higher up?"

"Cornwallis was hot for attempting something of the sort, but sight of the ice-floes in the river served to cool him, so he is going into winter quarters and will not stir from his cantonments until spring, unless the river freeze strong enough for him to cross on the ice."

"And what of the rebels?"

"'Tis sudden gone so out of fashion there is scarce one left. Washington has a few ragged troops watching us from across the river; but, except for these, there's not a man in the land who will own himself one. How many pardons have we issued in the Jerseys alone, Henry?" demanded the general, appealing to his secretary.

"Nigh four thousand; and at Trenton and Burlington, Mr. Meredith, the people are flocking in in such numbers that over four hundred took the king's oath yesterday," responded McKenzie.

"That shows how the wind holds, and what a summer's squall the whole thing has been," answered the host, gleefully; "I always said 't was a big windy bubble, that needed but the prick of British bayonets to collapse."

"There 'll be little left of it by spring, I doubt not," asserted Howe. "In faith, we may take it as a providence that we could not cross the Delaware, for a three-months will probably put an end to all armed opposition, and we may march into Pennsylvania with beating drums and flying colours. Even Cornwallis himself confesses that time is playing our game."

"Miss Meredith will be put to't to find a new toast," suggested Balfour.

"Well spoke," laughed his superior. "What will it be, fair rebel?"

"However," asserted Janice.

"Bravo!" vociferated the general. "Now indeed rebellion is on its last legs. You make me regret I can tarry but the meal, for when submission is so near 't is a pity not to stay and complete it."

"Was that why you left the Delaware, your Excellency?" asked Janice, archly.

The colour came flushing into Howe's cheeks, while both father and mother spoke sharply to the girl for her boldness and impertinence. But in a moment the general's good-nature was once more in the ascendant, and he interfered to save her from the scolding.

"Nay, nay," he interjected. "'T was but a proper retort to my teasing. I left the Delaware, Miss Janice, because the 'Brune' frigate sails for England in three days, and there are despatches to be writ and sent by her. And for the same reason I can tarry here but another hour, much as I should like to stay. Mr. Meredith, 't is a man's duty to aid a creditor to pay his debts. May I not hope to see you and Mrs. Meredith and Miss Janice at headquarters ere long? For if you come not willingly, I'll put Miss Janice under arrest as an arrant and avowed rebel, and have her brought to York under guard."

The departure of these guests gave but a brief quiet to the household, for two days later, at dusk, Clowes rode up, and his coming was welcomed all the more warmly that his escort of half a dozen dragoons led with them Joggles and Jumper.

"Have in, have in, man," cried the host, genially, "to where there's a fire and something to warm your vitals."

"Curse thy climate!" ejaculated the new-comer, as he stamped and shook himself in the hallway, to rid his shoulders and boots of their burden of snow. "The storm came on after we started; and six hours it's took us to ride from Princeton, while the wind blew so I feared the cattle would founder. But here's warmth enough to make up for the weather," he added, as he entered the parlour, all aglow with the light of the great blazing logs, and of the brushwood and

corn-cobs which Janice had thrown on their top when the horses had first been heard at the door. He shook Mrs. Meredith's hand, and then extended his own to Janice, only to have it ignored by her. In spite of this, and of an erect attitude, meant to express both distance and haughtiness, her flushed cheeks, and eyes that looked everywhere except into those of the visitor, proved that the girl was not as unmoved as she wished to appear.

"Where are thy manners, Jan?" reproved the father, who, having declared an amnesty as regarded the past, forgot that his daughter might not be equally forgiving.

"Give Mr. — Lord Clowes thy hand, child," commanded her mother, sternly, "and place a seat for him by the fire."

Janice pulled one of the chairs nearer to the chimney breast, and then returned to the quilting-frame, at which she had been working when the interruption came.

"Didst hear me?" demanded Mrs. Meredith.

Janice turned and faced the three bravely, though her voice trembled a little as she replied: "I will not shake his hand."

"Yoicks! Here's a kettle of fish!" ejaculated the commissary. "What's wrong?"

"Janice, do as thou art told, or go to thy room," ordered the mother.

The girl opened her lips as if about to protest, but courage failed her, and she hurriedly left the parlour, and flying to her room, she threw herself on the bed and wept out her sense of wrong on her pillow.

"I never would have, if he had n't — and it was n't I asked him to the house — and he took a mean advantage — and he was n't scolded for it, nor shamed to all the people — and now they show him every honour, though he — though for a year it was held up to me."

Presently the girl became conscious of the clatter of knives and forks on plates in the room beneath her, and of an accompaniment of cheerful voices and laughter. Far from lessening her woe, they only served to intensify it, till finally she rose in a kind of desperation, wishing only to escape from the merry sounds. "I'll go and see Clarion and Joggles and Jumper,"

she thought. "They love me, and — and they don't punish me when others are to blame."

Not choosing to pass through the kitchen, where the dragoons would probably be sitting, she stole out of the front door, without wrap or calash, and in an instant was almost swept off her feet and nearly blinded by the rush of wind and snow. Heeding neither, nor the instant wetting of her slippered feet, she struggled on through the waxing drifts to the stable door. With a sigh of relief that the goal was attained, she passed through the partly open doorway and paused at last, breathless from her exertion.

On the instant she caught her breath, however, and then demanded, "Who's there?" A whinny from Joggles was the only response. Taking no heed of the horse's greeting, Janice stood, listening intently for a repetition of the sound that had alarmed her. "I heard you," she continued, after a moment. Then she gave a little cry of fright, which was scarcely uttered when it was succeeded by a half-sob and half-exclamation of mingled joy and relief. "Oh, Clarion!" she exclaimed, "you gave me such a turn, with your cold nose. And what was mommy's darling doing with the harness? I thought some one was here."

Again Joggles whinnied, and, her fright entirely gone, Janice walked to his stall. "Was my precious glad to get back?" she asked, patting him on the back as she went into the stall. "Why, my poor dear! Did they go to their supper without even taking his saddle off? Well, he should — and his bridle, too, so that he could n't eat his hay! 'T was a shame, and —" Once again, Janice uttered an exclamation of fright, as her fingers, moving blindly forward in search of the buckle, came in contact with some cloth, under which she felt a man's arm. Nor was her fright lessened, though she did not scream, when instantly her arm in turn was seized firmly. The unknown peril is always the most terrifying.

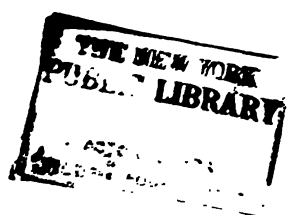
"I did not want to frighten you, Miss Janice —" began the interloper.

"Charles!" ejaculated the girl. "I mean, Colonel Brereton."

"I thought you'd scarcely come into the stall, and hoped to get away undiscovered."



“She threw herself on the bed and wept out her sense of wrong on the pillow.”



"But what are you — I thought you were across — How did you get here?"

"I had business to the northward," explained the officer, "and meant to have been in Bound Brook by this time. But the cursed snow came on, and, not having travelled the westerly roads, I thought best to keep to those with which I was familiar, though knowing full well that I ran the risk of landing in the arms of the British. Fortunately their troops are no fonder of facing our American weather than our American riflemen, and tucked themselves within doors, leaving it to us —" There the aide checked his flow of words.

"But why did you come here?"

Brereton laughed. "Does not a runaway servant always turn horse thief? My mare has covered near forty miles to-day, the last ten of it in the face of this storm, and so I left her at the Van Meter barn, and thought to borrow Joggles to ride on to Morristown to do the rest." Colonel Brereton's hand, which had continued on the girl's arm, relaxed its firm hold, and slipped down till it held her fingers. "And then, I — I wanted word of you, for the stories of Hessian doings that come to us are enough to make any man anxious." Janice felt his lips on her hand. "All is well with you?" he asked eagerly, after the caress.

Janice, forgetful of her recent woe, answered in the affirmative, as she tried to draw herself away. Her attempt only led to the man's hand on hers tightening its grip. "I can't let you go, Miss Janice, till you give me your word not to speak of this meeting. They could scarce catch me such a night, but my mission is too vital to take any risks."

"I promise," acceded Janice, readily.

Brereton let go her hand at once, and his fingers rattled the bit, as he hastily completed the buckling the girl's entrance had interrupted. "If I never return, you will claim your namesake, my mare, Miss Janice," he suggested as he backed Joggles out of the stall. "And treat her well, I beg you. She's the one thing that has any love for me. God knows if I ever see her again."

Forgetting that Brereton could not see her, Janice nodded her head. "You are going for good?" she asked.

"I fear for anything but that! For good or bad, however, I must ride my thirty miles to-night."

"Thirty miles!" cried Janice, with a shiver. "And your hands are dreadfully cold, and your teeth chatter."

"T is only the chill of inaction after hard and hungry riding. Ten minutes of cantering will set the blood jumping again."

"Can't you wait a moment while I get something for you to eat?" besought the girl.

"Bless you for the thought," replied the aide, with a little husk in his voice. "But my mission is too important to risk delay, much more the nearness of yon dragoons."

"For what are you going?" questioned Janice.

"To order — to get the dice for a last desperate main."

"General Washington is going to try — ?"

"Ay. Ah, Miss Janice, they have beaten our troops, but they've still to beat our general, and if I can but make Lee — I must not linger. Wilt give me a good-by and God-speed to warm me on the ride?"

"Both," answered Janice, holding out her hand, which the officer once again stooped and kissed. "And to-night I'll pray for his Excellency."

Brereton shoved open the door wide enough for the horse to pass through. "And not for his Excellency's aide?" he asked.

Janice laughed a little shyly as she replied: "Does not the greater always include the lesser?"

Barely were the words spoken, when a sound from the outside reached them, making both start and listen intently. It needed but an instant's attention to resolve the approaching noise into the jingle of bits and sabres.

"Hist!" whispered the officer, warningly. "Cavalry." He threw back the holster-flap of the saddle to free a pistol, and, grasping his scabbard to prevent it from clanking, he stepped through the doorway, leading Joggles by the bridle.

"Ho, there!" came a voice out of the driving snow. "We've lost sight and road. Which way is't to Greenwood?"

Brereton put foot in the stirrup and swung into the saddle.

"Away to the right," he responded, as he softly drew his sabre, and slipped the empty scabbard between his thigh and the saddle. Gathering up the reins, he wheeled Joggles to the left.

"Can't ye give us some guidance, whoever ye be?" asked the voice, now much nearer, while the sound of horses' breathing and the murmur of men's voices proved that a considerable party were struggling through the deepening snow. "Where are you, anyway?"

Brereton touched Joggles with the spur gently, and the steed moved forward. Not five steps had been taken before the horse shied slightly to avoid collision with another, and, in doing so, he gave a neigh.

"Here's the fellow, Hennion," spoke up a rider. "Now we'll be stabled quick enough." He reached out and caught at the bridle.

There was a swishing sound, as Brereton swung his sword aloft and brought it down on the extended arm. Using what remained of the momentum of the stroke, the aide let the flat of the weapon fall sharply on Joggles' flank; the horse bounded forward, and, in a dozen strides, had passed through the disordered troop.

A shrill cry of pain came from the officer, followed by a dozen exclamations and oaths from the troopers, and then a sharp order, "Catch or kill him!"

"Ha, Joggles, old boy," chuckled his rider, "there's not much chance of our being cold yet a while. But we know the roads, and we'll show them a trick or two if they'll but stick to us long enough."

Bang! bang! bang! went some horse-pistols.

"Shoot away!" jeered the aide, softly, though he leaned low in the saddle as he wheeled through the small opening in the hedge and galloped over the garden beds. "'Tis only British dragoons who'd blindly waste lead on a northeaster. 'Tis lucky the snow took no offence at my curses of it an hour ago."



XXIX

ON CONTINENTAL SERVICE

ONCE across the garden, the aide rode boldly, trusting to the snow overhead to hide his doings and the snow underfoot to keep them silent. Turning northward, he kept Joggles galloping for five minutes, then confident that his pursuers had been distanced, or misled, he varied the pace, letting the horse walk where the snow was drifted, but forcing him to his best speed where the road was blown clear.

"We know the route up to Middlebrook, Joggles; but after that we get into the hills, and blindman's work 't will be for the two of us. So 't is now we must make our time, if we are to be in Morristown by morning."

The rider spoke truly, for it was already six o'clock when he reached the cross-roads at Baskinridge. Halting his horse at the guide-post, he drew his sword and struck the crosspiece a blow, to clear it of its burden of snow.

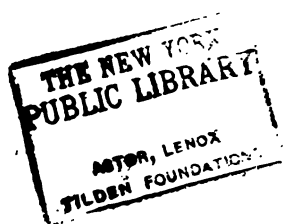
"Morristown, eight miles," he read in the dark grayness of approaching day. "Hast go enough in thee left to do it, old fellow? Damn Lee for his tardiness and folly, which forces man and beast to journey in such cold." Pulling a flask from his pocket, he uncorked it. "There 's scarce a drop left, but thou shouldst have half, if it would serve thee," he said, as he put it to his lips and drained it dry. "'Tis the last I have, and eight miles of Lee way still to do!" He laughed at his own pun, and pricked up the horse. Just as the weary animal broke into a trot, the rider pulled rein once more and looked up at a signboard which had attracted his notice by giving a discordant creak as the now dying storm swung it.

"A tavern! Here 's luck, for at least we can get some more



F. A. Connell

“The bolts were slipped back and the door was opened by a figure wrapped in a quilt.”



rum." Spurring the horse up to the door, he pulled a pistol from its holster and pounded the panel noisily.

It required more than one repetition of the blows to rouse an indweller, but finally a window was enough raised to permit the thrusting out of a becaped head.

"Who's below, and what do yez want?" it challenged gruffly.

"Never mind who I am. I want a pint of the best spirits you have, and a chance to warm myself for a ten minutes, if you've a spark of fire within."

"Oi've nothin' for anny wan who comes routin' me out av bed at such an hour, an' may the devil fly off wid yez for that same," growled the man. "Go away wid yez, an' niver let me see yez more."

The head was already drawn in, when Brereton, with quick readiness, called lustily: "Do as I order, or I'll have my troopers break in the door, and then look to yourself."

"Just wan minute, colonel," cried the man, in a very different tone; and in less than the time asked for the bolts were slipped back and the door was opened by a figure wrapped in a quilt, which one hand drew about him, while the other held a tallow dip aloft.

In the brief moment it took to do this, the officer not so much dismounted as tumbled from his horse, and he now walked stiffly into the public room, stamping his feet to lessen their numbness.

"Where's thim troopers yez was talkin' av?" questioned the landlord, peering out into the night.

"Throw some wood on those embers, and give me a drink of something, quickly," ordered Brereton, paying no heed to the inquiry.

"Bad 'cess to yez lies," retorted the man, shutting the door. "It's not wan bit av firing or drink yez get this night from — Oh, mother in hivin, don't shoot, an' yez honour shall have the best in the house, an' a blessin' along wid it! Only just point it somewheer else, darlin', for thim horse-pistols is cruel fond av goin' off widout bein' fired. Thank yez, sir, it's my wife in bed will bless the day yez was born." The man hastily raked open the bed of ashes and threw chips and billets on

the embers. Then he unlocked a corner cupboard. "Oi 've New England rum, corn whiskey, an' home-made apple-jack, sir."

"Give me the latter, and if you 've any food, let me have it. Brrew! From nigh Brunswick I've rid since nine last night and thought to perish a dozen times with the cold, dismount and run beside my horse as I would."

"Drop that pistol, or I shoot!" came a sharp order, spoken from the gloom of a doorway across the room. "You are a prisoner."

Brereton had been stooping over the fire, as it gained fresh life, but with one spring he was behind the chimney breast.

"T is idle to resist," persisted the hidden speaker. "The way is barred in both directions, and there are three of us."

Brereton laughed recklessly. "Come on, most courageous three. I've a bullet for one, and a sword for two."

"Howly hivin! just let me out first off," besought the publican.

"If I had lead to spare, you should have the first of it for letting me into this trap," Brereton told him viciously. "Why did you not warn me there were British hereabout?"

"Hold!" came the distant voice. "If you think us British, who are you?"

The officer hesitated, pondering on the possibility of being tricked, or of possibly tricking. "If you were a gentleman," he said, after a pause, "you'd give me a hint as to which side you belong."

The unseen man laughed heartily at Jack's reply. "Set me an example, then."

"That I will," said Jack, "though I don't guarantee the truth of it. I am an aide of General Washington, riding on public service."

"Time enough it took you to know it. And if so, what were you doing near Brunswick?"

"I took the route I knew best."

"Thy name is?"

"Jack Brereton."

"Art thou a green-eyed, carrot-faced put, who frights all the women with his ill looks?" cried the man, entering.



“Drop that pistol, or I shoot!” came a sharp order.”

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Brereton laughed as he stepped out from the sheltering projection. "Switch you, whoever you are, for keeping me from the fire when I am chilled to the marrow. Why, Eustace, this is luck beyond belief! But hast swallowed a frog? You croak so that I knew you not."

"Not I," responded the new-comer, shaking his fellow-officer's hand, "but I swallowed enough of yesterday's storm to spoil my voice, let alone this creeping out of bed in shirt only, to catch some malignant Tory or spy of King George."

"Where art thy comrades?" inquired Brereton, peering past the major.

Eustace laughed. "They're making acquaintance with thy troop of horse."

"But what art thou doing here in this lonely hostel, with a British force no further away than Springfield? Dost court capture?"

"Just what I told the general when he said he'd bide here till —"

"The general!" interrupted Brereton. "Is Lee here — in this tavern?"

"Ay. And sleeping through all the rout you made as sound —"

"Tis madness! However, I'll not throw blame, for it has saved me eight miles of weary riding. Wake him at once, as I must have word with him. And you, landlord, stable my horse, and see to it that he has both hay and oats in plenty."

There was some delay before Eustace returned with the word that the major-general would see the aide, and with what ill grace the interview was granted was shown by the reception, for on Brereton being ushered into the room, it was to find Lee still in bed, and so far under the counterpane that only the end of a high-coloured but very much soiled nightcap was in view, while on the top of the covering lay two dogs, who rose with the entrance of the interloper.

"Who the devil are ye; why the devil did ye have me waked; and what the devil do ye want?" was the greeting, grumbled from the bedclothes.

Brereton flushed as he answered sharply: "Eustace has no

doubt told you who I am, and letters from his Excellency must have already broke the purport of my mission. Finding you paid no heed to his written orders, he has sent me with verbal ones, trusting your hearing may not be as seriously defective as your eyesight."

The head of the general appeared, as he sat up in bed. "Is this a message from General Washington?" he vociferated.

"No. 'Tis my own soft speaking, in recognition of your complaisant welcome. But I bear a message of his Excellency. He directs that you march the entire force under you, without delay, by way of Bethlehem and Easton, and effect a junction with him."

"To what end?"

"The British think us so bad beat, and are so desirous to hold a big territory, for purposes of forage and plunder, that they have scattered their troops beyond supporting distance. Can we but get a force together sufficient to attack Burlington, Trenton, or Princeton, 't will be possible to beat them in detail."

"I have a better project than that," asserted Lee. "Let Washington but make a show of activity on the Delaware, and he shall hear of my doings shortly."

"But what better can be done than to drive them back from a country rich with food supplies, relieve the dread of their advancing upon Philadelphia, and give the people a chance to rally to us?" protested the aide.

"Pooh!" scoffed Lee. "'Tis pretty to talk of, but 'tis another thing to bring it off, and I make small doubt that 't will be no more successful than the damned ingenious manœuvres of Brooklyn and Fort Washington, which have unhinged the goodly fabric we had been building. I tell you we shall be in a declension till a tobacco-hoeing Virginian, who was put into power by a trick, and who has been puffed up to the people as a great man ever since, is shown to be most damnably weak and deficient. He's had his chance and failed; now 'tis for me to repair the damage he's done."

Brereton clinched his fist and scowled. "Do I understand that you refuse to obey the positive orders of his Excellency?"



“ ‘Is this a message from General Washington?’ he vociferated.”

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"'Tis necessary in detachment to allow some discretion to the commanding officer. However, I'll think on it after I've finished the sleep you've tried to steal." The general dropped back on the pillows, and drew up the bedclothes so as to cover his nose.

The aide, muttering an oath, stamped noisily out of the room, slamming the door with a bang that rattled every window in the house.

"I read failure in your face," remarked Eustace, still crouched before the fire.

"Failure!" snapped the scowling man, as he, too, stooped over the blaze. "Nothing but failure. Here, when the people have been driven frantic by the outraging of their women and the plundering of their property, and want but the smallest encouragement to rise, one man dishes all our hopes by his cursed ambition and disobedience."

"How so?"

Too angry to control himself, even to Lee's aide, Jack continued his tirade. "Ever since the general was put into office his subordinates have been scheming to break him down, and in Congress there has always been a party against him, who, through dislike or incapacity, clog all he advises or asks. With the recent defeats, the plotters have gained courage to speak out their thoughts, and your general goes so far as to refuse to obey orders that would make possible a brilliant stroke, because he knows that 't would stop this clack against his Excellency. Instead, he would have Washington sit passive and freezing on the Delaware while he steals the honours by some attempted action. And all the while he is writing to his Excellency letters signed, 'Yours most affectionately,' or 'God bless you,' — cheap substitutes for the three thousand troops he owes us." The aide went to the cupboard and helped himself to the apple-jack. "Canst get me a place to sleep, for God knows I'm tired?"

"Thou shalt have my bed, and welcome to thee," offered Eustace, leading the way upstairs. "Thou'lt not mind my getting into my clothes, for 't is not shirt-tail weather."

"Sixty miles and upward I've come since five o'clock yesterday morning, and I'd agree to sleep under a field-piece in

full action." Brereton took off his cap and wig to toss both on the floor, unbuckled his belt, and let his sabre fall noisily; then sitting on the bed, he begged, "Give me a hand with my boots, will you?" Those pulled off, without rising he rolled over, and, bundling the disarranged bedclothes about him, he was instantly asleep.

It was noon before consciousness returned to the tired body, and only then because the clatter of horses' feet outside waked the sleeper and startled him so that he sprang from the bed to the window. Relieved by the sight of Continental uniforms, Brereton stretched himself as if still weary, and felt certain muscles, to test their various degrees of soreness, muttering complaints as he did so. Throwing aside his jacket, waistcoat, and shirt, he took his sword and pried out the crust of ice on the water in the tin milk-pail which stood on the washstand. Swashing the ice-cold water over his face and shoulders, he groaned a curse or two as the chill sent a shiver through him. But as he rubbed himself into a glow, he became less discontented, and when resuming the flannel shirt, he laughed. "Thank a kind God that it's as cold to the British as 't is to us, and there are more of them to suffer." Another moment served to don his outer clothing and boots, and to fit on his wig and sword. His toilet made, he went downstairs, humming cheerily. He turned first to the kitchen door, drawn thither by the smell that greeted his nostrils.

"Canst give a bestarved man a big breakfast and quickly?" he asked the woman.

"Shure, Oi 've all Oi can do now," was the surly response, "'wid the general an' his staff, an' his escort, an' thim as is comin' an' goin', an'—"

Brereton came forward. "Ye'd niver let an Oirishman go hungry," he appealed, putting a brogue on his tongue. "Arrah, me darlin', no maid wid such lips but has a kind heart." The officer boldly put his hand under the woman's chin and made as if he would kiss her. Then, as she eluded the threatened blandishment, he continued, "Sure, and do ye call yeself a woman, that ye starve a man all ways to wanst?"

"Ah, go long wid yez freeness and yez blarney," retorted the woman, giving him a shove, though smiling.

"An', darlin'," persisted the unabashed officer, "it's owin' me somethin' ye do, for it was meself saved yez father's life this very morning."

"My father — shure, it's dead he's been this — It's my husband yez must be afther spakin' av."

"He's too old to be that same," flattered Brereton.

"'Tis he, Oi make shure," acknowledged the woman, as she nevertheless set her apron straight and smoothed her hair. "An' how did yez save his loife?"

"Arrah, by not shooting him, as I was sore tempted to do."

The landlady melted completely and laughed. "An' what would yez loike for breakfast?" she asked.

Brereton looked at the provisions spread about. "Just give me four fried eggs wid bacon, an' two av thim sausages, an' corn bread, wid something hot to drink, an' if that's buck-wheat batter in the pan beyant, just cook a dozen cakes or so, for I've a long ride to take an' they do be so staying. Also, if ye can make me up something — ay, cold sausages an' hard-boiled eggs, if ye've nothing else, to take wid me; an' then a kiss, to keep the heart warm inside av me, 't is wan man ye'll have given a glimpse av hivin."

"Bless us all!" marvelled Eustace, when twenty minutes later he entered the kitchen, to learn what delayed the general's lunch. "How came you by such a spread, when it's all any of us can do to get enough to keep life in us? Is 't sorcery, man?"

"No, witchery," laughed the aide. "If thy chief were but a woman, Eustace, I'd have Washington reinforced within a two days."

His breakfast finished, the aide secured pen and paper, and wrote a formal order for Lee to march. This done, he sought the general, and, interrupting a consultation he was holding with General Sullivan, he delivered the paper into his hands.

"I ask General Sullivan to witness that I deliver you positive instructions to march your force, to effect a junction with General Washington."

"I've already writ him a letter that will convince him I act for the best," answered Lee, holding out the missive.

The aide took it without a word, saluted, and left the room.

Going to the front door, where Joggles already awaited him, he put a Continental bill into the hands of the publican, bade adieu to Eustace, and rode away.

"'T is as bright a day as 't was dark a night, old man," he said to the horse, "but it never looked blacker for the cause, and I've had my long ride for nothing. Perhaps, though, there may be pay day coming. She knows that I'm to be at Van Meter's barn to-night. What say you, Joggles? Think you will she be there?"



XXX

SOME DOINGS BY STEALTH

THE sound of shots outside put a sudden termination to the supper in both the dining-room and kitchen of Greenwood, and served to bring inmates and candles to the front and back doors. Beyond the moment's rush of a body of horsemen past the house, no light on the interruption was obtained, until some of the escort of Clowes were despatched to the stable to learn if all was well with their horses. There they found the wounded man stretched on the snow, and just within the doorway lay Janice in a swoon, with Clarion licking her face. Both were carried to the house, and while Mrs. Meredith and the sergeant endeavoured to save the officer by a rude tourniquet, the squire held Janice's head over some feathers which Peg burned in a bed-warmer.

"Did they kill him?" was the first question the girl asked, when the combined stench and suffocation had revived consciousness.

"He's just expiring," her father replied. "His arm was struck off above the elbow, and he bleeds like a stuck pig."

Janice staggered up, though somewhat languidly. "May — Did he ask to see me?"

"Not he," she was told. "Come, lass, sit quiet for a bit till thy head is steady, and tell us what 't was all about."

Janice sank into the chair her father set beside the fire. "He was on some mission for his Excellency," she gasped, "and stopped here to get a fresh horse — that was how I came to know it — and while we were talking we heard the dragoons coming, so he mounted, to escape. Then I heard a cry — oh! such a cry — and the pistols — and — and — that's all I remember."

"Why went he to the stable rather than to the house in the first case?" demanded her father.

Janice looked surprised. "He knew the troopers were here," she explained.

The squire was about to speak, when Clowes' hand on his shoulder checked him. "There's more here than we understand," the latter whispered. "Let me ask the questions." He came to the fire and said: —

"Why did he take this route, if he was bearing despatches?"

The first sign of colour came creeping back into the pale cheeks of the girl, as she recalled the double motive the aide had given. "Colonel Brereton said he did not know the westerly roads, and so —"

"Colonel Brereton!" rapped out her father. "And what was he doing hereabout? Plague take the scamp that he must be forever returning to worry us!"

"How much of a force had he with him?" asked the commissary.

"He was alone," replied Janice.

"Alone!" exclaimed the baron, incredulously; then his face lost its look of surprise. "He came by stealth to see you, eh?"

There was enough truth in the supposition to destroy the last visible signs of the girl's swoon, and she responded over-eagerly: "I told you he was on a mission for his Excellency, and but stopped here to get a fresh horse."

"Ay," growled the squire, "he steals himself, then steals my crop, and now turns horse thief."

"He was not stealing, dad-da," denied Janice. "His own horse was tired, so he left her and said he'd return Joggles some time to-morrow evening."

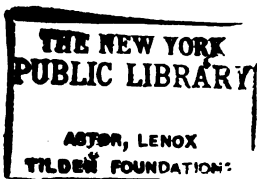
Clowes whistled softly, as he and the squire exchanged glances. Just as the former was about to resume his questioning, the sound of the front door being violently thrown open gave him pause, and the next instant Phil hurriedly entered the room.

"The troopers at the stable say ye found Captain Boyde. Is he bad hurt?" he demanded.

"To the death," spoke up the squire, for once missing the commissary's attempt to keep him silent. "Hast caught Brereton?"



“The sound of shots served to bring inmates and candles to the front and back doors.”



Janice had sprung to her feet and now stood listening, with a half-eager, half-frightened look.

"Brereton!" cried Philemon. "Did he head the party?"

The growing complexity was too much for the patience of the simple-minded owner of Greenwood. "May Belza have us all," he fumed, "if I can see the bottom or even the sides of this criss-cross business. Just tell us a straight tale, lad, if we are not to have the jingle brains."

"'Tis a swingeing bad business," groaned Phil. "Our troop rode over from Princeton ter-day, an' the houses at Brunswick bein' full of soldiers, I tells 'em that we could find quarters here. We was gropin' our way when the enemy set upon us, an' in the surprise cuts down the captain, an' captures three of our men."

"Dost mean to say ye let one man kill your captain and take three of ye prisoners?" scoffed the squire.

"One man!" protested the dragoon. "Think you one man could do that?"

"Janice insists that there was but Brereton — but Charles Fownes, now a rebel colonel."

"You may lay ter it there was mor'n —" Then Philemon wavered, for the sight of the flushed, guilty look on the girl's face gave a new bent to his thoughts. "What was he here for?" he vociferated, growing angrily red as he spoke and striding to the fire. "So he's doin' the Jerry Sneak about you yet, is he? I tell you, squire, I won't have it."

"Keep thy blustering and bullying for the mess-room and the tavern, sir," rebuked Clowes, sharply, also showing temper. "What camp manners are these to bring into gentlemen's houses and exhibit in the presence of ladies?"

"'S death, sir," retorted Phil, hotly, "I take my manners from no man, nor —"

"Hoighty, toighty!" chided Mrs. Meredith, entering. "Is there not wind enough outside but ye must bellow like mad bulls within?"

"Ay," assented the squire, "no quarrelling, gentlemen, for we've other things to set to. Phil, there is no occasion to go off like touchwood; 'tis not as thee thinks. What is true,

however, is that we've a chance to catch this same rogue of a Brereton, if we but lay heads together."

"Oh, dadda!" expostulated Janice. "You'll not — for I promised him to tell nothing — and never would have spoken had I not been dazed — and thinking him dead. I should die of —"

"Fudge, child!" retorted Mr. Meredith. "We'll have no heroics over a runaway redemptioner who is fighting against our good king. Furthermore, we must know all else he told ye."

"I passed him my promise to keep secret —"

"And of that I am to be judge," admonished the parent. "Dost think thyself of an age to act for thyself? Come: out with it; every word he spake."

"I'll not break my faith," rejoined Janice, proudly, her eyes meeting her father's bravely, though the little hands trembled as she spoke, half in fright and half in excitement.

"Nay, Miss Janice, ye scruple foolishly," advised Lord Clowes. "Remember the old adage, that 'A bad promise, like a good cake, is better broken than kept.'"

"Children, obey thy parents in the Lord, for this is right," quoted Mrs. Meredith, sternly.

"God never meant for me to lie — and that's what you would have me do."

The squire stepped into the hall, and returned with his riding-whip. "Thou'rt a great girl to be whipped, Janice," he announced; "but if thou'rt not old enough to obey, thou'rt not too old for a trouncing. Quickly, now, which wilt thou have?"

"You can kill me, but I'll keep my word," panted the maiden, while shaking with fear at her resistance, at the threatened punishment, and still more at the shame of its publicity.

Forgetful of everything in his anger, the squire strode toward his daughter to carry out his threat. Ere he had crossed the room, however, to where she stood, his way was barred by Philemon.

"Look a-here, squire," the officer remonstrated, "I ain't a-goin' ter stand by and see Janice hit, no ways, so if there's any thrashin' ter be done, you've got ter begin on me."

"Out of my way!" roared Mr. Meredith.

Phil folded his arms. "I've said my say," he affirmed, shaking his head obstinately; "and if that ain't enough, I'll quit talkin' and do something."

"The boy's right, Meredith," assented Clowes. "Nor do we need more of her. Send the girl to bed, and then I'll have something to say."

Reluctantly the squire yielded; and Janice, with glad tears in her eyes, turned and thanked Philemon by a glance that meant far more than any words. Then she went to her room, only to lie for hours staringly awake, listening to the wild whirring and whistling of the wind as she bemoaned her unintentional treachery to the aide, and sought for some method of warning him.

"I must steal away to-morrow to the Van Meters' barn at nightfall," was her conclusion, "and wait his coming, to tell him of my — of my mistake, for otherwise he may bring Joggles back and be captured. If I can only do it without being discovered, for dad-da —" and the anxious, overwrought, tired girl wept the rest of the sentence into her pillow.

Meantime, in the room below, Lord Clowes unfolded his plan and explained why he had wished the maiden away.

"'T is obvious thy girl has an interest in this fellow," he surmised, "and so 't is likely she will try to-morrow evening to see him, or get word to him. Our scheme must therefore be to let her go free, but to see to 't that we know what she's about, and be prepared to advantage ourselves by whatever comes to pass."

The storm ceased before the winter daylight, and with the stir of morning came information concerning the missing dragons: the body of one was found close to the stable, with a bullet in his back, presumably a chance shot from one of his comrades; a second rode up and reported himself, having in the storm lost his way, and wellnigh his life, which he owed only to the lucky stumbling upon the house of one of the tenants; and Clarion discovered the third, less fortunate than his fellow, frozen stiff within a quarter of a mile of Greenwood.

"'T is most like that rebel colonel and horse-thief shared the same fate, for 't was a wild night," remarked Clowes at the breakfast table. "Howbeit, 't will be best to have some troops

hid in your stable against this evening, for he may have weathered the storm."

The morning meal despatched, Philemon rode over to Brunswick to report the death of his superior to the colonel, as well as to unfold the trap they hoped to spring, and Harcourt considered the news so material that he and Major Tarleton accompanied Philemon on his return. After a plentiful justice to the dinner and to the decanters, the men, as the early winter darkness came on, settled down to cards, while Mrs. Meredith, in mute protest against the use of the devil's pictures, left the room, summoned Peg, and in the garret devoted herself to the mysteries of setting up a quilting-frame. As for the dragoons, they sprawled and lounged about the kitchen, playing cards or toss, and grumbling at the quantity and quality of the Greenwood brew of small beer, till Sukey was wellnigh desperate.

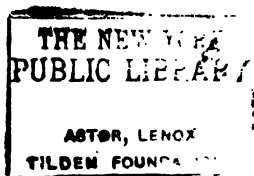
Had Janice been older and more experienced, the very unguardedness would have aroused her suspicions. To her it seemed, however, but the arrangement of a kind destiny, and not daring to risk a delay till after tea, when conditions might not again so favour her, she left the work she had sat down to in the parlour after dinner, and tiptoeing through the hall, lest she should disturb the card-players in the squire's office, she secured her warmest wrap. Returning to the parlour, she softly raised a window, and, slipping out, in another moment was within the concealing hedge-row of box.

Speeding across the garden, the girl crept through a break in the hedge, then, stooping low, she followed a stone wall till the road was reached. No longer in sight of the house, she hurried on boldly, till within sight of the Van Meter farm. She skirted the house at a discreet distance and stole into the barn. With a glance to assure herself that the mare was still there, and a kindly pat as she passed, she mounted into the mow, where for both prudence and warmth she buried herself deep in the hay. Then it seemed to Janice that hours elapsed, the sole sounds being the contented munching of horses and cattle, varied by the occasional stamp of a hoof.

Suddenly the girl sat up, with a realising sense that she had been asleep, and with no idea for how long. A sound below explained her waking, and as she listened, she made out the noise



“The body was found close to the stable with a bullet in his back.”



to be that of harnessing or unharnessing. Creeping as near the edge of the mow as she dared, she peered over, but all was blackness.

"Colonel Brereton?" she finally said.

A moment's silence ensued before she had an answer, though it was eager enough when it came. "Is't you, Miss Janice, and where are you?"

The girl came down the ladder and moved blindly toward the stalls. As she did so, somebody came in contact with her; instantly she was enfolded by a pair of arms, and before she could speak she felt a man's eager lips first on her cheek, and next on her chin.

"Heaven bless you for coming, my darling," whispered Brereton.

Janice struggled to free herself as Brereton tried to caress her the third time. "Don't," she protested. "You—I—How dare you?"

"A pretty question to ask an ardent lover and a desperate man, whose beloved confesses her passion by coming to him!"

"I didn't!" expostulated the girl, as, desperate with mortification, she broke away from the embrace by sheer strength and fled to the other side of the barn. "How dare you think such things of me?"

"Then for what came you?" inquired Jack.

"To warn you."

"Of what?"

"That you must not bring Joggles back, for they—the soldiers—are watching the stable."

"You told them?"

The girl faltered, hating to acknowledge her mistake, now that it was remedied. "If I had, why should I take the risk and the shame of coming here?" she replied.

"Forgive me, Miss Janice, for doubting you, and for my freedom just now. I did—for the moment I thought you like other women. I wanted to think you came to me, even though it cheapened you. And being desperate, I—"

"Why?" questioned the girl.

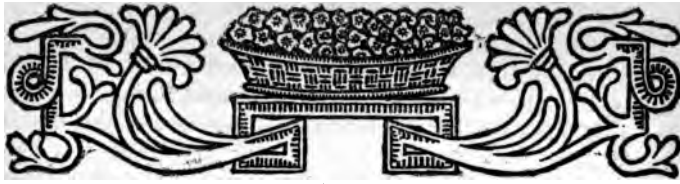
"I have failed in my mission, thanks to Lee's folly and selfishness. Would to God the troopers who lie in wait for

me would go after him ! A quick raid would do it, for he lies eight miles from his army, and with no guard worth a thought. There 'd be a fine prize, if the British did but know it."

"Thanks for the suggestion," spoke up a deep voice, and at the first word blankets were tossed off two lanterns, followed by a rush of men. For a moment there was a wild hurly-burly, and then Brereton's voice cried, "I yield !"

As the confusion ended as suddenly as it had begun, he added scornfully : —

"To treachery !"



AN EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS

THE prisoner's arms were hurriedly tied and he was mounted behind one of the troopers. Janice, meanwhile, who had been seized by Philemon and drawn to one side out of the struggle, besought permission of her special captor to speak to Brereton, her fright over the surprise and her dread of what was to come both forgotten in the horror and misery the last words of the aide caused her. The jealousy of the lover, united to the strictness of the soldier, made Philemon heedless of her prayers and tears, and finally, when the cavalcade was ready to start, she was forced to mount her namesake, and, with such seat as she could keep in the man's saddle, ride between Colonel Harcourt and Hennion.

No better fortune awaited her at Greenwood, the captive being taken to the kitchen, while the culprit was escorted to the parlour, to stand, shivering, frightened, and tearful, as her father and mother berated her for most of the sins of the Decalogue.

Fortunately for the maid, other hearts were not so sternly disapproving; and Lord Clowes, after waiting till the girl's distress was finding expression in breathless sobs, in order that she might be the more properly grateful, at last interfered.

"Come, come, squire," he interjected, crossing to the bowed form, and taking one of Janice's hands consolingly, "the lass has been giddy, but 't is an ill wind, truly, for through it we have one fine bird secured yonder, to say nothing of an even bigger prize in prospect. Cry a truce, therefore, and let the child go to bed."

"Ay, go to thy room, miss," commanded Mrs. Meredith, who had in truth exhausted her vocabulary, if not her wrath. "A pretty hour 't is for thee to be out of bed, indeed!"

Janice, conscious at the moment of but one partisan, turned to the baron. "Oh, please," she besought, "may n't I say just one word to Colonel Brereton — just to tell him that I did n't —"

"Hast not shamed us enough for one night with thy stolen interviews?" ejaculated her mother. "To thy room this instant!"

Made fairly desperate, Janice was actually raising her head to protest, when Harcourt and Philemon entered.

"One moment, madam," intervened the colonel. "I have been plying our prisoner with questions, and have some to ask of your daughter. Now, Miss Meredith, Lee's letter, that we found on the prisoner, has told us all we need, but we want to test the prisoner's statements by yours. Look to it that you speak us truly, for if we find any false swearing or quibbling, 't will fare ill with you." Then for three or four minutes the officer examined the girl concerning her first interview with the rebel officer, seeking to gain additional information as to Lee's whereabouts. Finding that Janice really knew nothing more than had been overheard in the Van Meter barn, he ended the examination by turning to Philemon and saying: —

"Sound boots and saddles, Lieutenant Hennion. You can guide us, I take it, to this tavern from which General Lee writes?"

"That I kin," asserted Phil, "though 't will be a stiff ride ter git there afore morning."

As the two officers went toward the door Janice made her petition anew. "Colonel Harcourt, may I have word with Colonel — with the prisoner, that he shall not think 'twas my treachery?" she pleaded.

"I advise agin it, Colonel Harcourt," interjected Philemon, his face red with some emotion. "That prisoner's a sly, sneaky tyke, and —"

"Get the troop mounted, Mr. Hennion," commanded his superior. "Mr. Meredith, I leave our captive in charge of a sergeant and two troopers, with orders that if I am not back within twenty-four hours he be taken to Brunswick. Whether we succeed or fail in our foray, Sir William shall hear of the

service you have been to us." Unheeding Janice's plea, the colonel left the room, and a moment later the bugle sounded in quick succession, "To horse," "The march," and "By fours, forward."

Interest in the departing cavalry drew the elders to the windows, and in this preoccupation Janice saw her opportunity to gain by stealth what had been denied her. Slipping silently from the parlour, she sped through hall and dining-room, pausing only when the kitchen doorway was attained, her courage wellnigh gone at the thought that the aide might refuse to believe her protestations of innocence. Certainty that she had but a moment in which to explain prevented hesitancy, and she entered the kitchen.

The two troopers were already stretched at full length on the floor, their feet to the fire, while the sergeant sat by the table, with a pitcher of small beer and a pipe to solace his particular hours of guard mount over the prisoner. The latter was seated near the fire, his arms drawn behind him by a rope which passed through the slats of the chair back. So far as these fetters would permit, Brereton was slouched forward, with his chin resting on his chest in a most break-neck attitude, sound asleep. There could be no doubt about it, beyond credence though it was to the girl! While she had been miserably conceiving the officer as ablaze with wrath at her, he, with the philosophy of the experienced soldier, had lost not a moment in getting what rest he could after his forty-eight hours of hard riding.

Such callousness was to Janice a source of indignation, and as she debated whether she should wake the slumberer and make her explanation, or punish his apathy by letting him sleep, Mrs. Meredith's voice calling her name in a not-to-be-misunderstood tone turned the balance, and, flying up the servants' stairway, Janice was able to answer her mother's third call from her own room. Worn out by excitement, worry, and physical fatigue, the girl, like the soldier, soon found oblivion from both past and future.

It was well toward morning when a finish was made to the night's doings, and the early habits of the household were for once neglected to such an extent that the dragoons at last lost

patience and roused Peg and Sukey with loudly shouted demands for breakfast, — a racket which served to set all astir once more.

With the conclusion of the morning meal, Janice rose from the table and went toward the kitchen, — an action which at once caused Mrs. Meredith to demand: "Whither art thou going, child?"

Facing about, the girl replied with some show of firmness: "'Tis but fair that Colonel Brereton should know I had no hand in his captivation; and I have a right to tell him so."

"Thou shalt do nothing of the sort," denied Mrs. Meredith. "Was not thy conduct last evening indelicate enough, but thou must seek to repeat it?"

Janice, with her hand on the knob, began to sob. "'Tis dreadful," she moaned, "after his doing what he did for us at York, and later, that he should think I had a hand in his capture."


"Tush, Jan!" ejaculated the squire, fretfully, the more that his conscience had already secretly blamed him. "No gratitude I owe the rogue, if both sides of the ledger be balanced. 'Tis he brought about the scrape that led to my arrest."

"Ay," went on Mrs. Meredith, delighted to be thus supported, "I have small doubt thy indelicacy with him will land us all in prison. Such folly is beyond belief, and came not from my family, Mr. Meredith," she added, turning on her husband.

"Well, well, wife; all the folly in the lass scarce comes from my side, for 'tis to be remembered that ye were foolish enough to marry me," suggested the squire, placably, his anger at his daughter already melted by the sight of her distress. "Don't be too stern with the child; she is yet but a filly."

"Thee means but a silly," snapped Mrs. Meredith, made the more angry by his defence of the girl. "Men are all of a piece, and cannot hold anger if the eyes be bright, or the waist be slim," she thought to herself wrathfully, quite forgetful of the time when that very tendency in masculine kind had been to her one of its merits. "Set to on the quilt, girl, and see to it that there's no sneaking to the kitchen."

Scarcely had Janice, obedient to her mother's behest, seated herself at the big quilting-frame, when Lord Clowes joined her.



"They treat ye harsh, Miss Janice," he remarked sympathetically; "but 'tis an unforgiving world, as I have good cause to wot."

Janice, who had stooped lower over the patches when first he spoke, flashed her eyes up for an instant, and then dropped them again.

"And one is blamed and punished for much that deserves it not. I' faith, I know one man who stands disgraced to the woman he loves best, for no better cause than that the depth of his passion was so boundless that he went to every length to gain her."

The quilter fitted a red calimanco patch in place, and studied the effect with intense interest.

"Wouldst like me to carry a message to the prisoner, Miss Janice?"

"Oh, will you?" murmured the girl, gratefully and eagerly. "Wilt tell him that I knew nothing of the plan to capture him, and was only trying to aid his escape? That, after all his kindness, I would never —"

Here the eager flow of words received a check by the re-entrance of Mrs. Meredith. Dropping his hand upon the quilting-frame so that it covered one of the girl's, the commissary conveyed by a slight pressure a pledge of fulfilment of her wish, and, after a few moments' passing chat, left the room. Before a lapse of ten minutes he returned, and took a chair near the girl.

Glancing at her mother, to see if her eyes wandered from the sock she was resoling, Janice raised her eyebrows with furtive inquiry. In answer the baron shook his head.

"'T is a curious commentary on man," he observed thoughtfully, "that he always looks on the black side of his fellow-creatures, and will not believe that they can be honest and truthful."

"Man is born in sin," responded Mrs. Meredith. "Janice, that last patch is misplaced; pay heed to thy work."

"I lately had occasion to justify an action to a man," went on Clowes, "but, no, the scurvy fellow would put no faith in my words, insisting that the person I sought to clear was covinous and tricky, and wholly unworthy of trust."

"The thoughts of a man who prefers to think such things," broke in Janice, hotly, "are of no moment."

"Ye are quite right, Miss Janice," assented the emissary, "and I would I'd had the wit to tell him so. 'T is my intention some day to call him to account for his words."

Further communion on this topic was interrupted by the incoming of Mr. Meredith, and during the whole day the two were never alone. His forgiveness partly won by his service, the commissary ventured to take a seat beside the quilter, and sought to increase his favour with her by all the arts of tongue and manner he had at command. As these were manifold, he saw no reason, as dusk set in, to be dissatisfied with the day's results. Inexperienced as Janice was, she could not know that the cooler and less ardent the man, the better he plays the lover's part; and while she never quite forgot his previous deceit, nor the trouble into which he had persuaded her, yet she was thoroughly entertained by what he had to tell her, the more that under all his words he managed to convey an admiration and devotion which did not fail to flatter the girl, even though it stirred in her no response. Entertained as she might be, her thoughts were not so occupied by the charm and honey of Lord Clowes's attentions as to pretermit all dwelling on the aide's opinion of her, and this was shown when finally an interruption set her free from observation.

It was after nightfall ere there was any variation of the monotonous quiet; and indeed the tall clock had just announced the usual bedtime of the family when Clarion's bark made the squire sit up from his drowse before the fire, and set all listening. Presently came the now familiar sound of hoof-beat and sabre-clank; springing to his feet and seizing a candle, Mr. Meredith was at the front door as a troop trotted in from the road.

"What cheer?" called the master of Greenwood.

"'T was played to a nicety," answered the voice of Harcourt, as he threw himself from the saddle. "Sound the stable call, bugler. Dismount your prisoner, sergeant, and bring him in," he ordered; and then continued to the host: "We had the tavern surrounded, Mr. Meredith, ere they so much as knew, bagged our game, and here we are."

The words served to carry the two to the parlour, and closely following came a sergeant and trooper, while between them, clothed in a very soiled dressing-gown and a still dirtier shirt, in slippers, his queue still undressed, and with hands tied behind his back, walked the general who but a few hours before had been boasting of how he was to save the Continental cause.

"If you have pity in you," besought the prisoner, "let me warm myself. What method of waging war is it which forces a man to ride thirty miles in such weather in such clothes? For the sake of former humanity, Mr. Meredith, give me something hot to drink."

In the excitement and confusion of the new arrivals, Janice had seen her chance, and, intent upon making her own statement of justification, she once again stole from the parlour and into the kitchen, so softly that the occupants of neither room were aware of escape or advent. She found the prisoner still tied to his chair, his body and head hanging forward in an attitude denoting weariness, Sukey engaged in cutting slices of bacon in probable expectation of demands from the newcomers, while the single trooper on guard had just opened the entry door, and was shouting inquiries concerning the success of the raid to his fellow-dragoons as they passed to the stable.

Acting on a sudden impulse which gave her no time for consideration, Janice caught the knife from the hand of Sukey, and, with two hasty strokes, cut the cord where it was passed through the slats of the chair-back, setting the prisoner free.

"Fo' de good Lord in hebin —" began the cook, in amazement; but, as the import of her young mistress's act dawned upon her, she ran to the fireplace and, catching up a log of wood, held it out to Brereton.

Owing to his stooping posture, the release of the cords had caused the aide to fall forward out of the chair; but he instantly scrambled to his feet, and without so much as a glance behind him, seized the billet from the hands of the cook and sprang toward the doorway, reaching it at the moment the dragoon turned about to learn the cause of the sudden commotion. Bringing the log down with crushing force on the man's head, Jack stooped as the man plunged forward, possessed himself

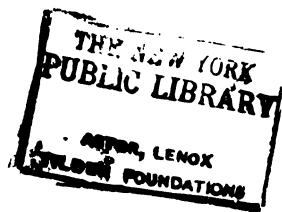
of his sabre, caught one of the long cavalry capotes from its hook in the entry, and, banging to the door, vanished in the outer darkness. There he stood for a moment, listening intently, apparently in doubt as to his next step; then electing the bolder course, he threw the coat about his shoulders, fastened the sabre to his side, and ran to the stable, where the tired troopers, in the dim light furnished by a solitary lantern, were now dismounting from their horses. Without hesitation the aide walked among them, and in a disguised voice announced: "Colonel Harcourt orders me to look to his horse."

"Here," called a man, and the fugitive stepped forward and caught the bridle the trooper threw to him. He stood quietly while the dragoons one by one led their horses into the stable, then pulling gently on the reins, he slowly walked the colonel's horse forward as if to follow their example, but, turning a little to the left, he passed softly around the side of the building. Letting down the bars into the next field, he quickened his pace until the road was reached; swinging himself into the saddle, he once more spurred northward.

"Poor brute," he remarked, "spent as thou art, we must make a push for it until beyond Middle-Brook, if I am to save my bacon. 'Tis a hard fate that makes thee serve both sides by turn, until there is no go left in thee. Luckily, the other horses are as tired as thou, or my escape would be very questionable, even though I had wit enough about me to see to it that I got the officer's mount. Egad, a queer shift it is that ends with Lee in their hands and me spurring northward to repeat the general's orders to Sullivan. Who knows but Mrs. Meredith and the parson may be right in their holding to foreordination?"



“The prisoner’s head was hanging forward in attitude denoting weariness.”





XXXII

UNDER DURANCE

AS BRERETON slammed the kitchen door behind him, the girl ran to the assistance of the injured trooper, only to recoil at sight of the blood flowing from his mouth and nose, and in uncontrollable horror and fright she fled to her own room. Here, cowering and shivering, she crouched on the floor behind her bed, her breath coming fast and short, as she waited for the sword of vengeance to fall. Ere many seconds the sounds below told her that the escape had been discovered, bangings of doors, shouts, bugle calls, and the clatter of horses' feet each in succession giving her fresh terror. Yet minute after minute passed without any one coming to find her, and at last the suspense became so intolerable that the girl rose and went to the head of the stairs to listen. From that point of vantage she could hear in the dining-room the voice of Harcourt sternly asking questions, the replies to which were so inarticulate and so intermixed with sobs and wails that Janice could do no more than realise that the cook was under examination. Harcourt's inquiries, however, served to reveal that the faithful Sukey was endeavouring to conceal her young mistress's part in the prisoner's escape; and as Janice gathered this, the figure which but a moment before had expressed such fear suddenly straightened, and without hesitation she ran down the stairs and entered the dining-room just in time to hear Sukey affirm:—

"I dun it, I tells youse, I dun it, and dat's all I will tells youse."

"Colonel Harcourt," announced the girl, steadily, "Sukey did n't do it. I took the knife from her and cut the prisoner loose before she knew what I had in mind."

"Doan youse believe one word dat chile says," protested Sukey.

"It is true," urged Janice, as eager to assume the guilt as five minutes before she had been anxious to escape it; "and if you want proof, you will find the knife on my bed upstairs."

"Oh, missy, missy!" cried Sukey, "wha' fo' youse tell dat? Now dey kill youse an' not ole Sukey;" and the sobs of the slave redoubled as she threw herself on the floor in the intensity of her grief.

It took but few interrogations on the part of Harcourt to wring all the truth from the culprit, and ordering her to follow him to the parlour, he angrily denounced the girl to her parents. Much to her surprise, she found that this latest enormity called forth less of an outburst than her previous misconduct, her father being quite staggered by its daring and seriousness; while Mrs. Meredith, with a sudden display of maternal tenderness that Janice had not seen for years, took the girl in her arms, and tried to soothe and comfort her.

One more friend in need proved to be Clowes, who, when Harcourt declared that the girl should be carried to Princeton in the morning, along with Lee, that Lord Cornwallis might decide as to her punishment, sought to make the officer take less summary measures, but vainly, except to win the concession that if Hennion recaptured the prisoner he would take a less drastic course. The morrow brought a return of the pursuing party, empty-handed, and in a hasty consultation it was agreed that the squire should accompany Janice, leaving Mrs. Meredith under the protection of Philemon, — an arrangement by no means pleasing to the young lieutenant, and made the less palatable by the commissary's announcement that he should retrace his own steps to Princeton in the hope of being of service to his friends. Philemon's protests were ineffectual, however, to secure any amendment; and the sleigh, with Brereton's mare and Joggles to pull it, received the three, and, together with Lee and the escort, set out for headquarters about noon.

With the arrival at Nassau Hall, then serving as barracks for the force centred there, a fresh complication arose, for Colonel Harcourt learned that Lord Cornwallis, having seen his force safely in winter quarters at Princeton, Trenton, and Burlington, had departed the day previous for New York, while General

Grant, who succeeded him, was still at Trenton. Taking the night to consider what was best to be done, Harcourt made up his mind to carry his prisoners to New York, a decision which called forth most energetic protests from the squire, who had contrived in the doings of the last two days to take cold, and now asserted that an attack of the gout was beginning. His pleadings were well seconded by the baron, and not to harass too much one known to be friendly both to the cause and to the commander-in-chief, the colonel finally consented that the fate of Janice should be left to the general in command. This decided, Lee was once more mounted, and captive and captors set about retracing their steps, while the sleigh carried the squire and Janice, under guard, on to Trenton, Mr. Meredith having elected to make the short trip to that town rather than await the indefinite return of Grant.

It was dusk when they reached Trenton, and once more they were doomed to a disappointment, for the major-general had departed to Mount Holly. Mr. Meredith's condition, as well as nightfall, put further travel out of the question, and an appeal was made to Rahl, the Hessian colonel commanding the brigade which held the town, to permit them to remain, which, thanks to the influence of the commissary, was readily granted, on condition that they could find quarters for themselves.

"No fear," averred the squire, cheerily. "I'll never want for sup or bed in Trenton while Thomas Drinker lives."

"Ach!" exclaimed the colonel. "Dod iss mein blace ver I sleeps und eats und drinks. Und all bessitzen you will it find."

Notwithstanding the warning, the sleigh was driven to the Drinkers' door, now flanked by a battery of field-pieces, and in front of which paced sentries, who refused to let them pass. Their protests served to attract the attention of the inmates, and brought the trio of Drinkers running to the door; in another moment the two girls were locked in each other's arms, while Mr. Meredith put his question concerning possible hospitality.

"Ay, in with thee all, Friend Lambert," cried Mr. Drinker, leading the way. "Thou'lt find us pushed into the garret,

and forced to eat at second table, while our masters take our best, but of what they leave us thou shalt have thy share."

"Is 't so bad as that?" marvelled Mr. Meredith, as, passing by the parlour, he was shown into the kitchen, and a chair set for him before the fire.

"Thee knows the tenets of our faith, and that I accept them," replied the Quaker. "Yet the last few days have made me feel that non-resistance —"

"Thomas!" reproved his sister. "Say it not, for when the curse is o'er, 't will grieve thee to have even thought it."

If the tempered spirit of the elders spoke thus, it was more than the warm blood of youth could do, and Tabitha gave a loose to her woes.

"'Tis past endurance!" she cried, "to come and treat us all as if we were enemies who had no right even to breathe. They take possession of our houses and turn them into pig-sties with their filthy German ways; they eat our best and make us slave for them day and night; they plunder as they please, not merely our cattle and corn, so that we are forced to beg back from them the very food we eat, but take as well our horses, our silver, our clothes, and whatever else happens to please their fancy. The regiment of Lossberg has at this moment nine waggon-loads of plunder in the Fremantle barn. No woman is safe on the streets after sundown, and scarcely so in the day-time, while night after night the town rings with their drunken carousals. I told Friend Penrhyn the other night that if he had the spunk of a house cat he would get something to fight with, if 't were nothing better than a toasting-fork tied to a stick, and cross the river to Washington; and so I say to every man who stays in Trenton. I only wish I were not a female!"

"Hush, Tabitha!" chided Miss Drinker, "'t is God's will that we suffer as we do, and thee shouldst bow to it."

"I don't believe it's God's will that we should be turned out of our rooms and made to live in the garret, or even in the barns, as some are forced to do; I don't believe it's God's will that they should have taken our silver tea-service and spoons. If God is just, He must want Washington to beat them, and so every man would be doing God's work who went to help him."

Evidently with whatever strength her father and aunt held to the tenets of their sect, Tabitha's was not sufficiently ingrained to stand the test of the Hessian occupation.

"Dost think it is God's work to kill fellow-mortals?" expostulated Miss Drinker. "No more of such talk, child; it is time we were making ready for supper."

There was, however, very much more talk of this kind over the hastily improvised meal, and small wonder for it. In a town of less than a thousand inhabitants, nearly thirteen hundred troops, with their inevitable camp followers, were forcibly quartered, filling every house and every barn, to the dire discomfort of the people. As if this in itself were not enough, the Hessian soldiery, habituated to the plundering of European warfare, and who had been sold at so much per head by their royal rulers to fight another country's battles, brought with them to America ideas of warfare which might serve to conquer, but would never serve to pacify, England's colonies. Open and violent seizure had been made, without regard to the political tenets of the owner, of every kind of provision; and this had generally been accompanied with stealthy plundering of much else by the common soldiery, and, indeed, by some of the officers. Thus, in every way, despite their submissions and oaths of allegiance to King George, the Jerseymen were being treated as if they were enemies.

Of this treatment the Drinker family was a fair example. Without so much as "by your leave," Colonel Rahl had taken possession of the first two floors of their house for himself and the six or seven officers whom he made his boon companions. Moreover, Mr. Drinker was called upon to furnish food, firewood, and even forage for them; while his servants were compelled to labour from morning till night in the service of the new over lords.

When the squire, after his fatiguing day, was compelled, along with his host and hostess and the girls, to climb two flights of stairs to an ice-cold garret, his loyalty was little warmer than the atmosphere; and when the five were further forced to make the best they could of two narrow trundle-beds, but a brief time before deemed none too good for the coloured servitors, with a scanty supply of bedclothes to eke the discomfort, he became quite of the same mind with Tabitha. Even the most

flaming love of royalty and realm serves not to keep warm toes extended beyond short blankets at Christmas-tide. It is not strange that late in December, 1776, all Jersey was mined with discontent, and needed but the spark of Continental success to explode.

Clowes had left his friends, after the interview with Rahl, to quarter himself upon an army acquaintance, and thus knew nothing of the hardships to which they were subjected. When he heard in the morning how they had fared, he at once sought the commander, and by a shrewd exaggeration of the Merediths' relations with Howe, supplemented by some guineas, secured the banishment of enough officers from the house to restore to the Drinkers two of their rooms.

To contribute to their entertainment, as well as to their comfort, he brought them word that Colonel Rahl, by his favour, bid them all to a Christmas festival the following day; and when Mr. and Miss Drinker refused to have aught to do with an unknown German, and possibly Papistical, if not devilish orgy, he obtained the rescinding of this veto by pointing out how unwise it would be to offend a man on whom their comfort for the winter so much depended.

It was, as it proved, a very novel and wonderful experience to the girls. After the two o'clock dinner which the invading force had compelled the town to adopt, the three regiments of Anspach, Lossberg, and Rahl, and the detachments of the Yagers and light horse, with beating drums and flying colours, paraded from one end of the town to the other, ending with a review immediately in front of the Drinkers' house. Following this the regimental bands of hautboys played a series of German airs which the now disbanded rank and file joined in vocally. Then, as night and snow set in, a general move was made indoors, at Rahl's quarters, to the parlour, where a tall spruce tree, brilliant with lighted tallow dips, and decorated with bits of coloured paper, red-tinted eggs, and not a little of the recent plunder, drew forth cries of admiration from both Janice and Tabitha, neither of whom had ever seen the like.

After a due enjoyment of the tree's beauty, the gifts were distributed; and then the company went to the dining-room, where the table sagged with the best that barnyard and pantry

could be made to produce, plus a perfect forest of bottles, — tall, squat, and bulbous. The sight of such goodly plenty was irresistible, and the cheer and merriment grew apace. The girls, eagerly served and all the time surrounded by a host of such officers as could speak English, and in fact by some who, for want of that language, could only show their admiration by ardent glances, were vastly set up by the unaccustomed attentions ; the squire felt a new warmth of loyalty creep through his blood with the draining of each glass ; and even Miss Drinker's sallow and belined spinster face took on a rosy hue and a cheerful smile as the evening advanced.

A crescendo of enjoyment secured by means of wine is apt to lack restraint, and presently, as the fun grew, it began to verge on the riotous. The officers pressed about the girls until the two were separated, and Janice found herself in a corner surrounded by flushed-faced men who elbowed and almost wrestled with one another as to which should stand closest to her. Suddenly one man so far forgot himself as to catch her about the waist ; and but for a prompt ducking of her head as she struggled to free herself, she would have been forcibly kissed. Her cries rose above the sounds of conviviality ; but even before the first was uttered, Clowes, who had kept close to her the whole evening, struck the officer, and the whole room was instantly in a turmoil, the women screaming, the combatants locked, others struggling to separate them, and Rahl shouting half-drunken orders and curses. Just as the uproar was at its greatest came a loud thundering at the door ; and when it was opened a becloaked dragoon, white with snow, entered and gave Rahl a despatch. Both the dispute and the conviviality ceased, as every one paused to learn what the despatch portended.

The commander was by this time so fuddled with drink that he could not so much as break the seal, much less read the contents ; and the commissary, who for personal reasons had been drinking lightly, came to his assistance, and read aloud as follows : —

BURLINGTON, Dec. 25, 1776.

SIR, — *By a spy just come in I have word that Mr. Washington, being informed of our troops having marched into winter quarters, and having been reinforced by the arrival of a*

column under the command of Sullivan, meditates an attack on some of our posts. I do not believe that in the present state of the river a crossing is possible, but be assured my information is undoubtedly true, and in case the ice clears, I advise you to be upon your guard against an unexpected attack at Trenton.

I am, sir, your most obed't h'ble serv't,

JAMES GRANT, *Major-General.*

"Nein, nein," grunted Rahl, tipsily, "I mineself has vort dat Vashington's mens hass neider shoes nor blankets, und die mit cold und hunger. Dey vill not cross to dis side, mooch ice or no ice, but if dey do, ve prisoners of dem make."

And once more the toasting and merry-making was resumed.

With not a little foresight the three ladies had availed themselves of the lull to escape from the festival to their own room, where, not content with locks and bolts, nothing would do Miss Drinker, as the sounds below swelled in volume and laxity, but the heavy bureau should be moved against the door as an additional barrier.

"Our peril is dire," she admonished the girls; "and if to-morrow's sun finds me escaped unharmed I shall thank Heaven indeed." Then she proceeded to lecture Janice. "Be assured thee must have given the lewd creatures some encouragement, or they would never have dared a familiarity. Not a one of them showed me the slightest disrespect!"

"Oh, Jan," whispered Tibbie, once they were in bed and snuggled close together, "if thee hadst been kissed!"

"What then?" questioned the maiden.

"It would be so horrible to be kissed by a man!" declared the friend.

"Wilt promise to never, *never* tell?" asked Janice, with bated breath.

"Cross my heart," vowed Tabitha.

"It—well—I— It isn't as terrible as you'd think, Tibbie!"



XXXIII

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS PARTY

AT the same hour that the Hessians were parading through the village streets a horseman was speeding along the river road on the opposite side of the Delaware. As he came opposite the town, the blare of the hautboys sounded faintly across the water, and he checked his horse to listen for a moment, and then spurred on.

"Ay, prick up your ears," he muttered to his steed. "Your friends are holding high carnival, and I wonder not that you long to be with them, 'stead of carrying vain messages in a lost cause. But for this damned floe of ice you'd have had your wish this very night."

A hundred rods brought the rider within sight of the cross-road at Yardley's Ferry, just as a second horseman issued from it. The first hastily unbuckled and threw back his holster flap, even while he pressed his horse to come up with the new arrival; while the latter, hearing the sound of hoofs, halted and twisted about in his saddle.

"Well met, Brereton," he called when the space between had lessened. "I am seeking his Excellency, who, I was told at Newtown, was to be found at Mackonkey's Ferry. Canst give me a guidance?"

"You could find your way, Wilkinson, by following the track of Mercer's brigade. For the last three miles I could have kept the route, even if I knew not the road, by the bloody foot-prints. Look at the stains on the snow."

"Poor fellows!" responded Wilkinson, feelingly.

"Seven miles they've marched to-day, with scarce a sound boot to a company, and now they'll be marched back with not so much as a sight of the enemy."

"You think the attack impossible?"

"Impossible!" ejaculated Brereton. "Look at the rush of ice, man. 'T would be absolute madness to attempt a crossing. The plan was for Cadwallader's brigade to attack Burlington at the same time we made our attempt, but I bring word from there that the river is impassable and the plan abandoned. His Excellency cannot fight both the British and such weather."

"I thought the game up when my general refused the command and set out for Philadelphia," remarked Wilkinson.

"Gates is too good a politician and too little of a fighter to like forlorn hopes," sneered Brereton. "He leaves Washington to bear the risk, and, Lee being out of the way, sets off at once to make favour with Congress, hoping, I have little doubt, that another discomfiture or miscarriage will serve to put him in the saddle. If we are finally conquered, 't will not be by defeat in the field, but by the dirty politics with which this nation is riddled, and which makes a man general because he comes from the right State, and knows how to wire-pull and intrigue. Faugh!"

A half-hour served to bring them to their destination, a rude wooden pier, employed to conduct teams to the ferry-boat. Now, however, the ice was drifted and wedged in layers and hummocks some feet beyond its end, and outside this rushed the river, black and silent, save for the dull crunch of the ice-floes as they ground against one another in their race down the stream. On the end of the dock stood a solitary figure watching a number of men, who, with pick and axe, were cutting away the lodged ice that blocked the pier, while already a motley variety of boats being filled with men could be seen at each point of the shore where the ground ice made embarkation possible. Along the banks groups of soldiers were clustered about fires of fence-rails wherever timber or wall offered the slightest shelter.

Dismounting, the two aides walked to the dock and delivered their letters to the commander. Taking the papers, Washington gave a final exhortation to the sappers and miners: "Look alive there, men. Every minute now is worth an hour to-morrow," and, followed by Brereton, walked to the ferry-house that he might find light with which to read the despatches. By the aid of the besmoked hall lantern, he glanced hastily through

the two letters. "General Gates leaves to us all the honour to be gained to-night. Colonel Cadwallader declares it impossible to get his guns across," he told his aide, without a trace of emotion in his voice, as he refolded the despatches and handed them to him. Then his eye flashed with a sudden exultation as he continued: "It seems there are some in our own force, as well as the enemy, who need a lesson in winter campaigning."

"Then your Excellency intends to attempt a crossing?" deprecated Brereton.

"We shall attack Trenton before daybreak, Brereton; and as we are like to have a cold and wet march, stay you within doors and warm yourself after your ride. You are not needed, and there is a good fire in the kitchen."

Brereton, with a disapproving shake of his head, stepped from the hallway into the kitchen. Only one man was in the room, and he, seated at the table, was occupied in rolling cartridges.

"Ho, parson, this is new work for you," greeted Brereton, giving him a hearty slap on the shoulder. "You are putting your sulphur and brimstone in concrete form."

"Ay," assented McClave, "and, as befits my calling, properly combining them with religion."

"How so?" demanded Brereton, taking his position before the fire.

"You see, man," explained the presbyter, "it occurred to me that, on so wet a night, 't would be almost impossible for the troops to keep their cartridges dry, since scarce a one in ten has a proper cartouch-box; so I set to making some new ones, and, having no paper, I'm e'en using the leaves of my own copy of Watts' Hymns."

"A good thought," said Brereton; "and if you will give them to me I will see to it that they be kept dry and ready for use. Not that they will need much care; there is small danger that Watts will ever be anything but dry."

"Tut, tut, man," reproved the clergyman. "Dry or not dry, he has done God's work in the past, and, with the aid of Heaven, he'll do it again to-night."

The rumble of artillery at this point warned the aide that the embarkation was actually beginning, and, hastily catching up the cartridges already made, he unbuttoned the flannel shirt he

wore and stuffed them in. Throwing his cloak about him, he hurried out.

The ice had finally been removed, and a hay barge dragged up to the pier. Without delay two 12-pounders were rolled upon it, with their complement of men and horses; and, leaving further superintendence of the embarkation to Greene and Knox, Washington and his staff took their places between the guns. Two row galleys having been made fast to the front, the men in them bent to their oars, and the barge moved slowly from the shore, its start being the signal to all the other craft to put off.

The instant the shelter of the land was lost, the struggle with the elements began. The wind, blowing savagely from the northeast, swept upon them, and, churning the river into foam, drove the bitterly cold spray against man and beast. Masses of ice, impelled by the current and blast, were only kept from colliding with the boat by the artillerymen, who, with the rammers and sponges of the guns, thrust them back, while the bowmen in the tractive boats had much ado to keep a space clear for the oars to swing. To make the stress the greater, before a fifty yards had been compassed the air was filled with snow, sweeping now one way and now another, quite shutting out all sight of the shores, and making the rushing current of the black, sullen river the sole means by which direction could be judged.

"Damn this weather!" swore Brereton, as an especially biting sweep of wind and water made him crouch the lower behind his shivering horse.

"Nothing short of that would serve to put warmth into it," asserted Colonel Webb. "You're not like to obtain your wish, Jack, though your cursing may put you where you'll long for a touch of it."

"Thou canst not fright me with threat of hell-fire damnation on such a night as this, Sam," retorted Brereton.

"Gentlemen," interposed Washington, drily, "let me call your attention to the General Order of last August, relative to profane language."

"Can your Excellency suggest any more moderate terms to apply to such a night?" asked Brereton, with a laugh.

"Be thankful you've something between you and the river, my boy. Twenty-four years ago this very week I was returning from a mission to the Ohio, and to cross a river we made a raft of logs. The ice surged against us so forcibly that I set out my pole to prevent our being swept down the stream; but the rapidity of the current threw the raft with so much violence against the pole that it jerked me out into ten feet of water, and I was like to have drowned. This wind and sleet seem warm when I remember that; and had Gates and Cadwallader been there, the storm and ice of to-night would not have seemed to them such obstacles. 'T was my first public service," he added after a slight pause. "Who knows that to-night may not be my last?"

"'T is ever a possibility," spoke up Webb, "since your Excellency is so reckless in exposing yourself to the enemy's fire."

Washington shrugged his shoulders. "I am in more danger from the rear than from the enemy," he said equably.

"Ay," agreed Jack, "but we fight both to-night. Give us victory at Trenton, and we need not spend thought on Baltimore."

"Congress is too frightened itself—" began Baylor, but a touch on his arm from the commander-in-chief checked the indiscreet speech.

Departure had been taken from the Pennsylvania shore before ten; but ice, wind, and current made the crossing so laborious and slow that a landing of the first detachment was not effected till nearly twelve. Then the boats were sent back for their second load, the advance meanwhile huddling together wherever there was the slightest shelter from the blast and the hail that was now cutting mercilessly. Not till three o'clock did the second division land, and another hour was lost in the formation of the column. At last, however, the order to march could be given, and the twenty-four hundred weary, besoaked, and well-nigh frozen men set off through the blinding storm on the nine-mile march to Trenton.

At Yardley's Ferry the force divided, Sullivan's division keeping to the river turnpike, intending to enter Trenton from the south, while the main division took the cross-road, so as to come out to the north of the town, the plan being to place the enemy thus betwixt two fires.

Owing to the delay in crossing the river, it was daylight when the outskirts of the town were reached, but the falling snow veiled the advance, and here the column was halted temporarily to permit of a reconnoissance. While the troops stood at ease an aide from Sullivan's detachment reported that it had arrived on the other side of the village, and was ready for the attack, save that their cartridges were too damp to use.

"Very well, sir," ordered Washington. "Return and tell General Sullivan he must rely on the bayonet."

"Your Excellency," said Colonel Hand, stepping up, "my regiment is in the same plight, and our rifles carry no bayonets."

"We kin club both them and the Hessians all the same," spoke up a voice from the ranks.

"Here are some dry cartridges," broke in Brereton.

"Let your men draw their charges and reload, Colonel Hand," commanded Washington.

In a moment the order to advance was issued, and the column debouched upon the post road leading toward Princeton. The first sign of life was a man in a front yard, engaged in cutting wood; the commander-in-chief, who was leading the advance, called to him: —

"Which way is the Hessian picket?"

"Find out for yourself," retorted the chopper.

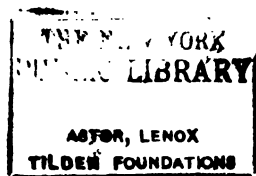
"Speak out, man," roared Webb, hotly, "this is General Washington."

"God bless and prosper you, sir!" shouted the man. "Follow me, and I'll show you," he added, starting down the road at a run. As he came to the house, without a pause, he swung his axe and burst open the door with a single blow. "Come on," he shrieked, and darted in, followed by some of the riflemen.

Leaving them to secure the picket, the regiments went forward, just as a desultory firing from the front showed that the alarm had been given by Sullivan's attack. Pushing on, a sight of the enemy was gained, — a confused mass of men some three hundred yards away, but in front of them two guns were already being wheeled into position by artillerymen, with the obvious purpose of checking the advance till the regiments had time to form.



“ ‘ Which way is the Hessian picket ? ’ ”



"Capture the battery!" came the stern voice of the commander.

"Forward, double quick!" shouted Colonel Hand.

Brereton, putting spurs to his horse, joined in the rush of men as the regiment broke into a run. "Look out, Hand!" he yelled. "They'll be ready to fire before we can get there, and in this narrow road we'll be cut to pieces. Give them a dose of Watts."

"Halt!" roared Hand, and then in quick succession came the orders, "Deploy! Take aim! Fire!"

"Hurrah for the Hymns!" cheered Brereton, as a number of the gunners and matross men dropped, and the remainder, deserting the cannon, fell back on the infantry. "Come on!" he roared, as the Virginia light horse, taking advantage of the open order, raced the riflemen to the guns. Barely were they reached, when a mounted officer rode up to the Hessian regiments and cried: "Forwärts!" waving his sword toward the cannon.

"We can't hold the guns against them!" yelled Brereton. "Over with them, men!"

In an instant the soldiers with rifles and the cavalry with the rammers that had been dropped were clustered about the cannon, some prying, some lifting, some pulling, and before the foe could reach them the two pieces of artillery were tipped over and rolled into the side ditches, the Americans scattering the moment the guns were made useless to the British.

This gave the Continental infantry in the rear their opportunity, and they poured in a scathing volley, quickly followed by the roar of Colonel Forrest's battery, which unlimbered and opened fire. A wild confusion followed, the enemy advancing, until the American regiments charged them in face of their volleys. Upon this they broke, and falling back in disorder, endeavoured to escape to the east road through an orchard. Checking the charge, Washington threw Stevens' brigade and Hand's riflemen, now re-formed, out through the fields, heading them off. Flight in this direction made impossible, the enemy retreated toward the town, but the column under Sullivan now blocked this outlet. Forrest's fieldpieces were pushed forward, Washington riding with them, utterly unheeding of both the

enemy's fire, though the bullets were burying themselves in the snow all about him, and of the expostulations of his staff. Indicating the new position for the guns, he ordered them loaded with canister.

Colonel Forrest himself stooped to sight one of the 12-pounders, then cried: "Sir, they have struck."

"Struck!" exclaimed Washington.

"Yes," averred Forrest, exultingly. "Their colours are down, and they have grounded their arms."

Washington cantered toward the enemy.

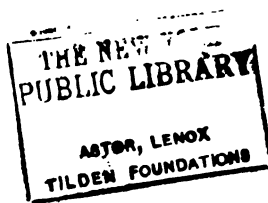
"Your Excellency," shouted Baylor, who with the infantry had been well forward, "the Hessians have surrendered. Here is Colonel Rahl."

Washington rode to where, supported by two sergeants, the officer stood, his brilliant uniform already darkened by the blood flowing from two wounds, and took from his hand the sword the Hessian commander, with bowed head, due to both shame and faintness, held out to him.

"Let his wounds receive instant attention," the general ordered. Wheeling his horse, he looked at the three regiments of Hessians. "'T is a glorious day for our country, Baylor!" he said, the personal triumph already forgotten in the greater one.



“Give them a dose of Watts.”





XXXIV

HOLIDAY WEEK AT TRENTON

THE Christmas revel of the Hessians had held far into morning hours; and though the ladies so prudently retired, it was not to sleep, as it proved, for the uproar put that out of the question. At last, however, the merry-making ceased by degrees, as man after man staggered off to his quarters, or succumbing to drink, merely took a horizontal position in the room of the festivity, and quiet, quickly succeeded by slumber, descended upon the household.

To the women it seemed as if the turmoil had but just ended, ere it began anew. The first alarm was a thundering on the front door, so violent that the intent seemed to be to break it down rather than to gain admission from the inside. Then came a rush of heavy boots pounding upstairs, followed by a renewal of the ponderous blows on every door, accompanied now by the stentorian shouting of hasty sentences in German.

As if the din were not sufficient, Miss Drinker, in her fright at the assault directed against the barrier to which she had pinned her own reliance of safety, promptly gave vent to a series of shrieks, intermixed, when breath failed, with gasping predictions to the girls as to the fate that awaited them, scaring the maidens most direfully. Their terror was not lessened by the growing volume of shouts outside the house, and by the rub-a-dub-dub of the drums, and the tantara of the bugles, as the "To arms" was sounded along the village street. Barely had they heard Rahl and the other officers go plunging downstairs, when the scattering crack of muskets began to be heard, swelling quickly into volleys and then into the unmistakable platoon firing, which bespoke an attack in

force. Finally, and as a last touch to their alarm, came the roar of artillery, as Forrest's and Knox's batteries opened fire.

The whole conflict took not over thirty-five minutes, but to the three bedfellows it seemed to last for hours. The silence that then fell so suddenly proved even more awful, however, and became quickly so insupportable that Janice was for getting out of bed to learn its cause, a project that Miss Drinker prohibited. "I know not what is transpiring," she avowed, "but whatever the disturbance, our danger is yet to come."

The event verified her opinion, for presently heavy and hurried footsteps of many men sounded below stairs, terminating the brief silence. With little delay the tramp of boots came upstairs, and a loud rap on the door drew a stifled cry from the spinster as she buried her head under the bedclothes, and made the two girls clutch each other with fright.

"Open!" called a commanding voice. "Open, I say!" it repeated, as no answer came. "Batter it in, then!" and at the order the stocks of two muskets shattered the door panels; the bureau was tipped over on its face with a crash, and Brereton, sword in hand, jumped through the breach.

It was an apparently empty room into which the aide entered, but a mound under the bedclothes told a different tale.

"Here are other Hessian pigs who've drunk more than they've bled," he sneered, as he tossed back the counterpane and blankets with his sword-point, thus uncovering three becaped heads, from each of which issued a scream, while three pairs of hands wildly clutched the covering.

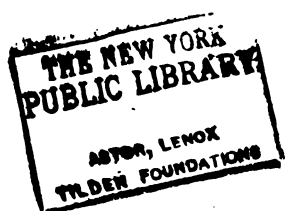
The nightcaps so effectually disguised the faces that not a one did the officer recognise in his first hasty glance.

"Ho!" he jeered. "Small wonder the fellow lay abed. Come, up with you, my Don Juan," he added, prodding Miss Drinker through the bedclothes with his sword. "'Tis no time for bearded men to lie abed."

"Help, help!" shrieked Janice, and "'Tis my aunt!" cried Tabitha, in unison, but the spinster's fear was quite forgot in the insulting allusion to the somewhat noticeable hirsute adornment on her face; sitting up in bed, she pointed at the door, and sternly ordered, "Cease from insulting gentlewomen, brute, and leave this chamber!"



"It was an apparently empty room into which the aide entered."



"Zounds!" burst out Jack, in his amazement; then he turned and roared to the gaping and snickering soldiers, "Get out of here, every doodle of you, and be —— to you!" Keeping his back to the bed, he said, "I pray your pardon, ma'am, for disturbing you; our spies assured us that only Hessian officers slept here."

"Go!" commanded the offended and unrelenting old maid.

The officer took a step toward the door, halted, and remarked savagely, "Our positions are somewhat reversed, Miss Meredith. 'Tis poetic justice, indeed, which threatens you a taste of the captivity you schemed in my behalf; 'he cries best who cries last.'"

"I had naught to do with thy captivation!" protested Janice, indignantly, "though thou wouldst not believe me; and but for me thou 'dst still be a prisoner."

"A well-dressed-up tale, but told too late to gain credence," sneered the officer. "You made a cully of me once. I defy you to ever again."

"A man who thinks such vile thoughts is welcome to them," retorted the girl, proudly.

"Dost intend to put a finish to thy intrusion upon the privacy of females?" objurgated Miss Drinker; and at the question Brereton flung out of the room without more words.

The ladies made a hasty toilet, and descended to the kitchen, to find the maids deep in the preparation of breakfast, while standing near the fire was a coloured man in a brown livery who ducked low to Janice as he grinned a recognition.

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl, and then, "How's Blueskin?"

"Lor' bless de chile, she doan forget ole Willium nor dat horse," chuckled the darkey. "Dat steed, miss, hardly git a good feed now once a week, but he knows dat he carries his Excellency, an' dat de army's watchin' him, an' he make believe he chock full of oats all de time. He jus' went offen his head when Ku'nel Forrest's guns wuz a-bustin' de Hessians all to pieces dis mornin', an' de way he dun arch his neck an' swish his tail when Gin'l Howe give up his sword made de enemy stare."

"You 'll purvey my compliments to his Highness, Mr. Lee," requested the cook, "an' 'spress to him de mortification we 'speriences at being necessitated to tender him his tea outen de elegantest ob best Japan. 'Splain to him dat we 'se a real quality family, an' regularly accustomed to de finest ob plate, till de Hessians depredated it."

"Is this for General Washington?" questioned Janice, with sudden interest in the tray upon which the cook had placed a china tea-service, some hot corn bread, and a rasher of bacon.

"Yes, miss," explained William. "His Excellency's in de parlour, a-lookin' over de papers of de dead gin'l, an' he say see if I kian't git him some breakfast."

"Oh," begged the girl, eagerly, "may n't I take it to him?"

"Dat yo' may, honey," acceded the black, yielding to the spell of the lass. "Massa allus radder see a pooty face dan black ole Billy's. Jus' yo' run along with it, chile, an' s'prise him."

Catching up the waiter, the maiden carried it to the parlour, which she entered after knocking, in response to Washington's behest. The general looked up from the paper he was conning and instantly smiled a recognition to the girl.

"You are not rid of us yet, you see, Miss Janice," he said.

"Nor wish to be, your Excellency," vouched the girl, as she set the tray on the table.

"I remember thy wish for our cause when last we met," went on the commander, "and who knows but it has served us in good stead this very morning? I had the vanity that day to think thy interest was for the general, but I have just unravelled it to its true source."

"Indeed," protested Janice, sorely puzzled by his words, "'t was only thy —"

"Nay, nay, my dear," chided Washington, smiling pleasantly; "'t is nothing to be ashamed of, and I ought to have suspected that thy interest was due to some newer and brighter blade than an old one like myself. He is a lucky fellow to have won so charming a maid, and one brave enough to take such risk for him."

"La, your Excellency," stammered the girl, completely mystified, "I know not what you mean!"

Still smiling, Washington set down the tea he was now drinking and selected a paper from a pile on the table. "I have just been perusing Colonel Harcourt's report to General Grant, in reference to the traitorous conduct of one Janice Meredith, spinster, and it has informed me of much that Colonel Brereton chose to withhold, though he pretended to make me a full narration. The sly beau said 't was the *cook* cut him loose, Miss Janice."

"Oh, prithee, General Washington," beseeched a very blushing young lady, "wilt please favour me by letting Colonel Brereton—who is less than nothing to me—read the report?"

"Thou takest strange ways to prove thy lack of interest," rejoined the general, his eyes merry at the seeming contradiction.

"'Tis indeed not as thou surmisest," protested Janice, redder than ever; "but Colonel Brereton thought I was concerned in his captivation, and would not believe a message I sent to him, and but just since he has cruelly insulted me, and so I want him to learn how shamefully he has misjudged me, so that he shall feel properly mean and low."

"That he shall," Washington assented, "and every man should be made to feel the same who lacks faith in your face, Miss Janice. The rascal distinguished himself in this morning's affair, so I let him bear my despatches and the Hessian standard to Congress; however, as soon as he returns he shall smart for his sins, be assured. But, my dear," and here the eyes of the speaker twinkled, "when due punishment has been meted out, remember that forgiveness is one of your sex's greatest excellences." Washington took the hand of the girl and bent over it. "Now leave me, for we have much to attend to before we can set to getting our prisoners across the river, out of the reach of their friends."

Twenty-four hours later the village which had been so overburdened with soldiers was stripped as clear of them as if there were not one in the land. It took a day to get the thousand prisoners safely beyond the Delaware, and three

more were spent in giving the Continentals a much-needed rest from the terrible exposure and fatigue they had undergone ; but this done, Washington once more crossed the river and reoccupied Trenton, induced to take the risk by the word brought to him that the militia of New Jersey, driven to desperation by the British occupation, and heartened by the success of Trenton, were ready to rise if they had but a fighting point about which to rally.

The expectation proved erroneous, for the presence of the little force at Trenton was more than offset by the prompt mobilisation of all the British troops in the State at Princeton, and the hurrying of Cornwallis, with reinforcements, from New York, to resume the command. As Washington's army mustered less than five thousand, one-third of whom were raw Pennsylvania militia, while that of the British general when concentrated exceeded eight thousand, the prudent elected to stay safely within doors and await the result of the coming conflict before deciding whether they should forget their recently signed oaths of allegiance and cast in their lot with the Continental cause.

Yet another difficulty, too, beset the commander-in-chief. The terms of the New England regiments expired on the last day of the year, and though the approach of the enemy made a speedy action certain, the men refused to re-enlist, or even to serve for a fortnight longer. Such was the desperate plight of the general that he finally offered them a bounty if they would but remain for six weeks, and, after much persuasion, more than half of them consented to stay the brief time. The army chest being wholly without funds, Washington pledged his personal fortune to the payment of the bounty, though in private he spoke scornfully of the regiments' "noble example" and "extraordinary attachment to their country," the fighting spirit too strong within him to enable him to understand desertion of the cause at such an hour. Quite a number, even, who took the bounty, deserted the moment the money was received.

Cornwallis lost not a moment, once his troops were gathered, in seeking vengeance for Trenton ; and on January 2 spies brought word to Washington that the British were approach-

ing in force by the Princeton post-road. A detachment was at once thrown forward to meet their advance, and for several hours every inch of ground was hotly contested. Then, the main body of the enemy having come up, the Americans fell back on their reserves, and the whole Continental army retreated through the village and across the bridge over Assanpink Creek, — a tributary stream emptying into the Delaware just east of Trenton. Here the troops were ranged along the steep banks to renew the contest, the batteries being massed at the bridge and at the two fords, and some desultory firing occurred. But it was now dark, and Cornwallis's troops having marched fifteen miles, the commander postponed the attack till the morrow, and the two armies bivouacked for the night on opposite sides of the brook, within a hundred and fifty yards of each other.

"My Lord," protested Sir William Erskine, when the order to encamp was given, "may not the enemy escape under cover of the night?"

"Where to?" demanded Cornwallis. "This time there will be no crossing of the Delaware, for we are too close on their heels; and if they retreat down the river, we can fight them when we please. A little success has undone Mr. Washington, and the fox is at last run to cover."

While at supper, the British commander was informed by an orderly that two civilians desired word with him, and without leaving the table he granted an audience.

"A petticoat, eh?" he muttered, as a man and woman entered the room; and then as the lady pushed back her calash, he ordered: "A chair for Miss Meredith, sergeant." The girl seated, he went on: "Sir William spoke of you to me just as I was leaving New York, and instructed me, if you were findable, to send you to New York. I' faith, the general had more to say of your coming than he had of my teaching Mr. Washington a lesson. He told me to put you under charge of Lord Clowes without delay."

"But he was captivated," announced Mr. Drinker.

"So I learned at Princeton; therefore the matter must await my return."

"I have come with the young lady, my Lord," spoke up Mr.

Drinker. "to ask thy indulgence in behalf of herself and her father."

"Yes, Lord Cornwallis," said Janice, finding her tongue and eager to use it. "We came here to see General Grant, but he was away, and dad-da had a slight attack of the gout, from a cold he took, and then he very rashly drank too much at Colonel Rahl's party, and that swelled his foot so that he's lain abed ever since, till to-day, when we thought to set out for Brunswick; but the snow having melted, our sleigh could not travel, and every one expecting a battle wanted to get out of town themselves, so we could get no carriage, nor even a cart." Here Miss Meredith paused for breath with which to go on.

"Friend Meredith," said Mr. Drinker, taking up the explanation, "though not able to set foot to the ground, conceives that he can travel on horseback by easy riding; and rather than risk remaining in a town that is like to be the scene of to-morrow's unrighteous slaughter, he hopes thee will grant him permission and a pass to return to Brunswick."

"There will be no fight in the town to-morrow," asserted Cornwallis; "but there may be some artillery firing before we can carry their position, so 't is no place for non-combatants, much less women. You can't do better than get back to Greenwood, where later I'll arrange to fulfil Sir William's orders. Make out a pass for two, Erskine. When do you wish to start, Miss Meredith?"

"Dad-da said we'd get away before daylight, so as to be well out of town before the battle began."

"Wisely thought. The second brigade lies at Maidenhead and the fourth at Princeton; and as both have orders to join me, you'll meet them on the road. This paper, however, will make all easy."

"Thank you," said the girl, gratefully, as she took the pass.

"Didst see Mr. Washington when he was in town?" inquired the earl of Mr. Drinker.

"Not I," replied the Quaker; "but friend Janice had word with him."

"You seem to play your cards to stand well with both commanders, Miss Meredith," intimated the officer, a little

ironically. "Did the rebel general seem triumphant over his easy victory?"

"He said naught about it to me," answered Janice.

"Within a few hours he'll learn the difference between British regulars and half-drunk Hessians." Cornwallis glanced out of the window to where, a quarter of a mile away, could be seen the camp-fires of the Continental force burning brightly. "He 'd best have done his bragging while he could."



CHAPTER XXXV

THE "STOLE AWAY"

IT was barely four o'clock the following morning when, after a breakfast by candle-light, the squire and Janice, the former only with much assistance and many groans, mounted Joggles and Brereton's mare. Mr. Drinker rode with them through the village, on his way to join the Misses Drinker, who, two days before, on the first warning of a conflict, had been sent away to a friend's, as would Janice have been also, had she not insisted on staying with her father. At the crossroads, therefore, after a due examination of their passes by the picket, adieux were made, and the guests, with many thanks, turned north on the Princeton post-road, while the host trotted off on the Pennington turnpike.

It was still dark when, an hour later, the riders reached Maidenhead, to find the second brigade of the British clustered about their camp-fires; but in the moment's delay, while the officer of the day was scrutinising the safe-conduct, the drums beat the reveille, and the village street was alive with breakfast preparations as father and daughter were permitted to resume their journey. It was a clear, cold morning, and as the twilight slowly brightened into sunshine, the whole landscape glistened radiantly with a heavy hoar-frost that for the moment gleamed and shimmered as if the face of the country had been rubbed with some phosphorescent substance, or as if the riders were viewing it through prism glasses.

"Oh, dadda, is n't it beautiful?" exclaimed Janice, delightedly, as they rode down the hill to the bridge over Stony Creek.

"What? Where?" demanded that worthy, looking about in all directions.

"The fields, and the trees, and —"

"Can't ye keep your thoughts from gadding off on such nonsense, Jan?" cavilled her father, fretfully, his gouty foot putting him in anything but a sweet mood. "One would think ye had never seen pasture or woodland be — Ho!" he ejaculated, interrupting his reproof, "what's that sound?"

The words were but spoken when the front files of a regiment just topping the hill across the brook came in view and descended the road at quick step to the bridge, their gay scarlet uniforms, flying colours, and shining gun barrels adding still more to the brilliancy.

"Halt!" was the order to the troops as they came up to the riders, and the officer took the pass that the squire held out to him. "What hour left you Trenton?" he demanded.

"Four o'clock."

"And heard you any firing after leaving?" asked Colonel Mawhood, eagerly.

"Not a sound."

"I fear none the less that the fighting will be all over ere the Seventeenth can get there, much more the Fortieth and Fifty-fifth," he grumbled, as he returned the paper. "Attention! Sections, break off! Forward — march!"

The order, narrowing the column, allowed the squire and Janice to ride on and cross the bridge. On the other side of the stream a by-road joined the turnpike, and as Janice glanced along it, she gave a cry of surprise. "Look, dad-da," she prompted, "there are more troops!"

"Ay," acceded Mr. Meredith, "'t is the rest of the brigade just coming in view."

"But that leads not from Princeton," observed Janice. "'T is the roundabout way to Trenton that joins the river road on the other side of Assanpink Creek. And, oh, dad-da, look at the uniforms! Is 't not the hunting shirt of the Continental riflemen?"

"Gadsbodikins, if the lass is not right!" grunted the squire, when he had got on his glasses. "What the deuce do they here?"

An equal curiosity apparently took possession of the British colonel, for when the Seventeenth had breasted the hill to a

point where the American advance could be seen, the regiment was hastily halted, and in another moment, reversing direction, returned on its route at double quick, its commander supposing the force in sight a mere detachment which he could capture or cut to pieces, and little recking that Washington's whole army, save for a guard to keep their camp-fires burning, had stolen away in the night from the superior force of British at Trenton, with the object of attacking the fourth brigade at Princeton.

"By heavens!" snorted the squire, in alarm. "Quicken thy pace, Jan. We are out of the frying-pan and into the fire with a vengeance." Then as the horses were put to a trot, he howled with the pain the motion caused his swathed foot. "Spur on to Princeton, Jan. The pace is more than I can bear, and I'll turn off into this orchard for safety," he moaned, as he indicated a slope to the right of the road.

"I'll not leave thee, dadda," protested the girl, as she guided the mare over the let-down bars of the fence, through which her father put Joggles, and in a moment both horses were climbing the declivity under the bare apple-trees.

The squire's knowledge of warfare was never likely to win him honour, for with vast circumspection he had selected the strongest strategic position of the region; and though his back to the British and the rising land in his front prevented him from realising it, both commanders, with the quick decision of trained officers, put their forces to a run, in the endeavour to occupy the hill. The Continental riflemen, having the advantage of light accoutrements and little baggage, were successful; and just as the two riders reached the crest, it was covered by green and brown shirted men.

"Get to the rear!" stormed an officer at the pair; while, without stopping to form, the men poured in a volley at the charging British, who, halting, returned the fire, the bullets hurtling and whistling about the non-combatants in a way that made the squire forget the agonies of his gout in the danger of his position.

Ere the riflemen could reload, the Seventeenth, with fixed bayonets, were upon them, and the two American regiments, having no defensive weapon, broke and fled in every direction.

A mounted officer rode forward and attempted to stay the flight of the riflemen, then fell wounded from his horse. As he came to the ground, Janice and her father found themselves once more on the other side of the conflict, as the charging British swept by them; and the girl screamed as she saw two of the soldiers rush to where the wounded man lay, and repeatedly thrust their bayonets into him, though she was ignorant that it was Washington's old companion in arms, General Mercer.

As the riflemen fell back down the hill, Washington in person headed two regiments of Pennsylvania militia, supported by a couple of pieces of artillery from the right flank to cover the fugitives. Although conscious by now that he had no mere detachment to fight, Colonel Mawhood, with admirable coolness, ordered the recall sounded, and re-forming his regiment, led a charge against the new foe. Seeing the Seventeenth advancing at double quick, in the face of the guns, so fearlessly and steadily, the militia wavered, and were on the point of deserting the battery, when Washington spurred forward, thus placing himself between the two lines of soldiers. His splendid and reckless courage steadied the raw militia; they gave a cheer and levelled their muskets just as the Seventeenth halted and did the same. Within thirty yards of the enemy, and well in advance of his own men, Washington stood exposed to both volleys as the two lines fired, and for a moment he was lost to view in the smoke which, blown about him, united in one dense cloud. Slowly the mass lifted, revealing both general and horse unhurt, and at the sight the Pennsylvania regiments cheered once more.

The time lost by the British in halting and firing proved fatal to the capture of the guns. Hand's riflemen, advancing, threw in a deadly, scattering fire of trained sharpshooters, while two regiments under Hitchcock came forward at a run. One moment the Seventeenth held its ground, then broke and fled toward the road, leaving behind them two brass cannon. For four miles the fugitives were pursued, and many prisoners were taken.

Musketry on the right showed the day not yet won, however, the Fifty-fifth having pressed forward upon hearing the fusil-

lade, and but for the check it met from a New England brigade would have come to the aid of its friends. The flight of the Seventeenth enabled Washington to mass his force against the new arrival; and it was driven in upon the Fortieth, and then both fell back into the town, taking possession of the college building, with the evident hope of finding in its walls protection sufficient to make a successful stand. But when the Continental artillery was brought up and wheeled into position, at the first shot the British abandoned the stronghold and fled in disorder along the road leading to Brunswick, hotly pursued by a force which Washington joined.

"It's a fine fox chase, my boys!" he shouted to the men, in the excitement of the moment.

Brereton, who was riding within hearing, called something to a bugler; and the man, halting in the race, put his trumpet to his lips and blew a fanfare.

"There are others can sound the 'Stole Away,' your Excellency," shouted Jack, triumphantly. "That insult is paid in kind."

The Continental soldiers were too exhausted by their long night march and their morning fight to follow the fugitives far, the more that the English, by throwing away their guns, knapsacks, and other accoutrements, and by being far less fatigued, were easily able to outstrip their pursuers. Perceiving this, the general ordered the bugles to sound the recall, and the men fell back on Princeton village.

"With five hundred fresh troops, or a proper force of light horse, we could have captured every man of them," groaned Brereton, "and probably have seized Brunswick, with all its stores."

Washington nodded his head in assent. "'Tis idle to repine," he said calmly, "because the measure of our success might have been greater. The troops have marched well and fought well."

"What is more," declared Webb, "a twelve hours ago, the enemy thought us in a cul-de-sac. We have not merely escaped, but turned our flight into a conquest. How they will grit their teeth when they find themselves outgeneralled!"

"Less a couple of hundred prisoners to boot," chimed in

Brereton, pointing at the village green, where the captives were being collected.

"Your Excellency," reported General Greene, as Washington came up to the college building, "we have found a store of shoes and blankets in the college, and all of the papers of the Lord Cornwallis and General Grant."

"Look to them, Brereton, and report to me at once if there is anything needing instant attention," directed Washington.

Jack, tossing his reins to a soldier, followed Greene into Nassau Hall, and was quickly running over the bundles of papers which the British, with more prudence than prescience, had for safety left behind. Presently he came upon a great package of signed oaths of allegiance, which he was shoving to one side as of no immediate importance, when the name signed at the bottom of the uppermost one caught his eye.

"Oh, Joe, Joe!" he laughed, taking up the paper, "is this thy much-vaunted love of freedom?" Glancing at the second, he added, "And Esquire Hennion! Well, they deserve it not; but I'll do the pair a harmless service all the same, merely for old-time days," he muttered, as he folded up the two broadsides and stuffed them into his pocket.

While the aide was thus engaged, Washington rode over to inspect the prisoners. Here it was to discover the squire and Janice, the former having been made a prize of by a more zealous than sagacious militiaman. Giving directions to march the prisoners at once under guard to Morristown, the commander turned to the girl.

"Thou'rt not content to give us thy good wishes, Miss Janice," he said, motioning to the guard to let the two go free, "but addrest the aid of thy presence as well."

"And were within an ace of getting shot thereby," complained the squire, still not entirely over his fright. "Egad, general, we were right between the shooting at one minute, and heard the bullets shrieking all about us."

"But so was his Excellency, dadda," protested Janice. "Oh, General Washington," she added, "when you rode up so close to the British, and I saw them level their guns, I was like to have fell off my horse with fear for you."

"Ay," remarked the squire, for once unprecedentedly dip-

lomatic. "The lass stood her own peril as steadily as ever I did, but she turned white as a feather when the infantry fired at you, and, woman-like, burst into tears the moment the smoke had lifted enough to show you still unhurt."

"And now has tears in her eyes because I was not shot, I suppose," Washington responded, with a smiling glance at the maiden.

"No, your Excellency," denied the girl, in turn smiling through the tears. "But dad-da is quite wrong: 't was not anxiety for you that made me weep, but fear that they might have killed Blueskin!"

Washington laughed at the girl's quip. "It seems my vanity is so great that I am doomed ever to mistake the source of your interest. Come," he added, "the last time we met I was beholden to you for a breakfast. Let me repay the kindness by giving you a meal. One of my family reports that the lunch of the officers' mess of the Fortieth was just on the table at the provost's house when our movements gave them other occupation. 'T is fair plunder, and I bid you to share in it."

During the repast the father and daughter told how they had come to be mixed in the conflict, and the squire grumbled over the prospect before him.

"I've no place to go but Greenwood, and now they threat to take my lass to New York over this harebrain scrape she's got us all into."

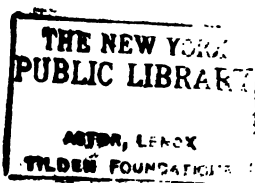
"'T would be gross ingratitude," asserted Washington, "if we let Miss Meredith suffer for her service to us, and 't is a simple matter to save her. Get me pen, ink, and a blank parole, Baylor."

The paper brought, Washington filled in a few words in his flowing script, and then placed it before the girl. "Sign here," he told her, and when it was done he took back the document. "You are now a prisoner of war, released on parole, Miss Janice," he explained, "and pledged not to go more than ten miles from Greenwood without first applying to me for permission. Furthermore, upon due notice, you are again to render yourself my captive."

Janice, with a shy glance, which had yet the touch of impertinence that was ingrain in her, replied, "I was that the



“Washington rode over to inspect the prisoners.”



first time I met your Excellency, and have been so ever since."

An end was put to the almost finished meal at this point by the clatter of hoots, followed by the hurried entrance of Brereton. "General St. Clair sends word, sir, that a column of British is advanced as far as Stony Brook, and is —" There the aide caught sight of Janice, and stopped speaking in his surprise.

"Go on, sir!" ordered Washington, sternly.

"And is driving in our skirmishes. He has report that 't is the first of the whole English army, which is pressing on by forced marches."

"'T is time, then, that we were on the wing," asserted the general, rising. "Colonel Webb, tell General St. Clair to hold the enemy in check as long as he can. You, Baylor, direct Colonel Forrest to plant his guns on the green, to cover the rearguard. General Greene, let the army file off on the road to Somerset Court-house."

The orders given, he turned to make his farewell to Janice. "This time Lord Cornwallis did not cheat us of our meal, though he prevents our lingering long at table. You should know best, sir," he said to the esquire, "what course to pursue, but I advise you to start for Greenwood without delay, for there will be some skirmishing through the town, and the British commander is not likely to be in the best of moods."

"We 'll be off at once," assented Mr. Meredith.

"Then Miss Janice will allow me the office of mounting her," solicited the general, as they all went to the door. "Is not that Colonel Brereton's mare?" he continued, as the orderly brought up the horses.

"Yes, your Excellency," stammered Janice. "'T was by a strange chance —"

"No doubt, no doubt —" interrupted Washington, smiling.

"Belike he wants her back," intimated the squire, glancing anxiously at the aide, who stood, with folded arms, watching the scene.

"I think he 'll not grudge the loan, in consideration of the rider," insinuated Washington. "The more that Congress

has just voted him a sword and horse for his conduct at Trenton. How is it, Brereton?"

With a shrug of the shoulders Jack muttered, "'Tis no time to demand her back, got though she was by a trick," and walked away.

"You have not shown him the paper?" questioned Janice, as she settled herself in the saddle.

"No, my child," replied Washington. "He returned from Baltimore only last evening, and there has been no time since. But rest easy, he shall see it. Keep good wishes for us, and fare thee well."

Two hours later the British marched into Princeton. But the Continental forces had made good their retreat, and all that was left to their pursuers was to march on wearily to Brunswick to save the broken regiments and the magazines that had been lost in spite of them, had Washington possessed but a few fresh troops. The English general had been out-manceuvred, his best brigade cut to pieces, and the army he had thought to annihilate was safe among the hills of New Jersey.

"Confound the fox!" stormed Cornwallis. "Can I never come up with him?"

"He's got safe off twice, my lord; the third time is proverbial, and the odds must turn," urged Erskine.

"Pray Heaven that some day we may catch him in a cul-de-sac from which there can be no retreat."



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